



ACROSS FRANCE
IN A CARAVAN

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ACROSS FRANCE IN A CARAVAN



AN EARLY START.

W. B. Chamberlain.
From his Mother, Edin. Decr 1843

ACROSS FRANCE IN A CARAVAN

BEING SOME
ACCOUNT OF A JOURNEY FROM BORDEAUX TO
GENOA IN THE "ESCARGOT"

TAKEN IN THE WINTER 1889-90

BY THE
AUTHOR OF
'A DAY OF MY LIFE AT ETON'

George Nugent-Bankes

With 50 Illustrations by John Wallace,
after Sketches by the Author

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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TO
PEGGY,
THE DARLING PARTNER OF
MY LIFE'S JOURNEY.

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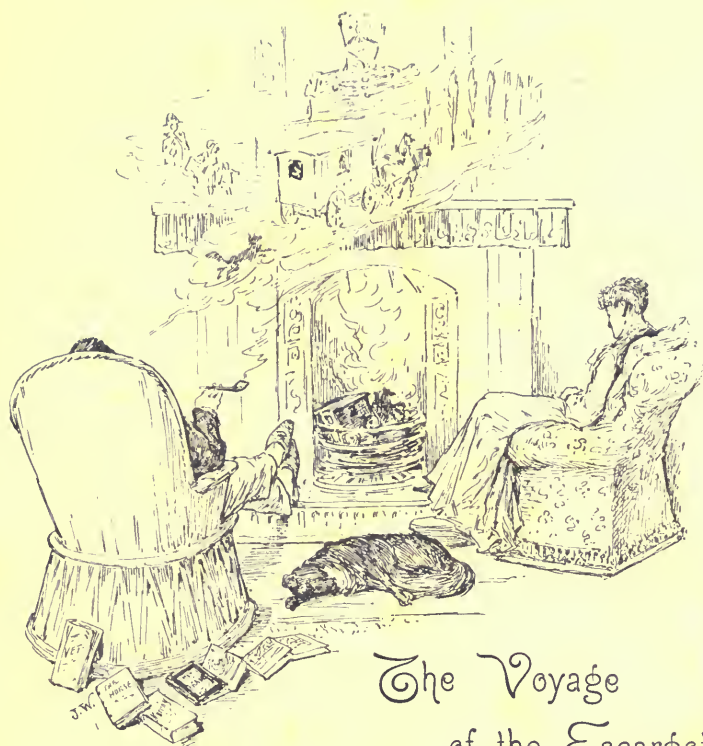
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The Voyage of the Escargot.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE PURCHASE OF THE ESCARGOT: WITH SOME DETAILS
OF HER CONSTRUCTION.

WHOSE idea the Escargot originally was, I am not prepared to definitely state. I had a kind of notion that she was mine, but Peggy says No, she was hers: which of course affords considerable grounds for my supposing that such must have been the case. However, it is needless to

enter into that question here: suffice it to say, that when it had been agreed between ourselves that caravan travelling was a delightful mode of existence in the abstract, it only remained to put the conclusion into a concrete form. I happened to have come across a gentleman of the travelling amateur photographic persuasion, whose health had obliged him to abandon his nomadic life, and who therefore wanted to sell his caravan: so after a brief, a particularly brief period, I may say, of negotiation,—for, as does not too often happen in this life, at least it doesn't seem to often happen to me, especially when I want to sell anything,—the very two people who wanted one another had on this occasion run against each other—well, certain moneys passed from me to him, and the Escargot became an established fact in my stable-yard.

I may mention here, by the way, that our new possession's name was one which we bestowed upon her ourselves: in fact, it was the first thing that we did to her. Her former owner had called her by a far more pretentious name—the *Hirondelle*: but we dislike on principle promises that are not likely to be performed; and it seemed to us that a *Hirondelle* which weighed just under two tons could hardly be expected to act up to her name. Peggy objected to the *Elephant* as an emendation, as well as to the *Hippopotamus*, so we ultimately decided on the *Escargot*, and a more expressive name than that I don't think we could have chosen.

We had settled on our route some time before we had even begun to negotiate for the purchase of the *Escargot*: when we had begun to talk about it, it was already nearly the end of September, and of course it would have been unsatisfactory—mind, I don't say impossible, as that is a word which ought to be expunged from every caravanist's vocabu-

lary—to have attempted to start on a caravan expedition anywhere within the limits of the United Kingdom, which, much though we love it as our native country, is still undeniably an extremely muddy and foggy country, as a rule, to drive through during the winter months: so we were going to the south of France. The Escargot was to be shipped to Bordeaux, where we were to join her, and then having bought our horses there, we were to work our way across to the Riviera and so on to Genoa, whence she was to be shipped home again: all of which,—allowing for mishaps—I don't think I can be exactly described as a fatalist, but it always seems to me that if one doesn't allow for mishaps, they invariably occur,—would, we calculated, occupy from three to four months, the period that I could just allow myself away from home.

Our party was to consist originally of Peggy, the collie James, and myself. Peggy was to do the cooking: James—well, James was to have certain undefined duties, which, now I come to think over it after it is all finished, never were exactly defined: for the most part he enacted the *rôle* of distinguished passenger. But of course it would have been out of the question to have left him behind: one might almost as well have thought of leaving me. As for myself, I was to look after the horses when we had got them: I didn't know very much about horses, to tell the truth, at that time, except how to actually drive them, and perhaps take a stone out if it got into a shoe on the road; and when I had studied various books on horses and their ailments—the chief part of said books being devoted to the ailments—and had heard all that my more horsey friends had to tell me about them, I must own I began to feel a little tremulous, and to revolve in my mind whether it wouldn't perhaps be

better to get a traction-engine instead, as being less delicate. And I was to make myself generally useful to Peggy—and, I suppose, to James.

The Escargot having been in use before, and indeed having made a very considerable trip herself under her former owner, we naturally profited by the results of his experience, and didn't have so much trouble in fitting her out as we should have had if we had bought her new from the builder. The body was thirteen feet over all in length, six feet six inches in width, and the same in height, the highest point of the roof, taking it as mounted on the wheels, being nine feet six from the ground. The underworks were a splendid bit of smithery, calculated to resist even the most extraordinary shocks,—a not altogether unwise precaution, considering all things. The wheels stood rather abnormally far apart, right outside the body, and the extreme length of axle was eight feet six inches, which of course made the running rather heavy, but had the counter-advantage of rendering the whole structure of excessively stable equilibrium: and both hind wheels were fitted with a shoe and a powerful lever brake, and there was a roller stop to one of them to help in going up hill. The wheels were painted red picked out with black, as was also the pole, which was of ash, and ready fitted with chains. Below the body between the hind wheels was a large case, painted white, and secured with a bar and padlock, containing all the stable requisites and other things, such as our bath, the paraffin-oil can, the lifting-jack, and the force-pump, which was worked by the foot and had a long delivery-pipe to connect with another depending on the outside from our cistern for the purpose of replenishing it.

The framing of the body was of oak, with a double skin

of deal match-boarding, painted white outside, with yellow panelling, and varnished inside; and there was a removable striped canvas covering to put on all over for extra protection against weather. The roof was also of deal, with an overlay of waterproof canvas, also painted white, and raised on battens about two inches above the true roof. At the fore end of the caravan there was a footboard of eighteen inches in width, on which the driver stood, or, as it more frequently happened during the journey, except in cases of extreme emergency which required more than usually careful control over the horses, sat with his legs dangling over the side, or his feet resting on the fore-carriage. A ladder hooked on to this footboard when the Escargot was at rest and the pole was removed, and formed the front doorsteps of our movable residence: when we were in motion this ladder was hung on brackets across the back of the fodder-box.

From the footboard the doorway, of which the half-glass door slid back in two sections into the double skin of the caravan, one on each side, led into the interior. There were three windows, one at each side, also sliding and with sliding-shutters, and one at the back which opened horizontally on its centre, the shutter of that falling outwards from the lower sill. So that we could if we liked get six distinct draughts through the interior of the Escargot: but besides that, she was fitted with a most efficient system of ventilation, consisting of four air-shafts rising from below the floor to within a foot of the roof to admit fresh air, and six ventilators with talc shutters fitted so as to only open outwards, to let the used-up air out, and another ventilator over the stove; so that a constant current was ensured, and it didn't matter even if all the windows and doors were shut, though indeed that rarely hap-

pened.—we were sure of never feeling even any stuffiness: suffocation, which some people have hinted at, was out of the question.

The bed lay across the extreme back end, secured against shaking by straps, forming a couch, or place to put things on during the day, and opening out to make a double bed at night: under it was a large cupboard or locker where we stowed away Peggy's dress-trunk, and anything that was not in immediate use during the journey. Lockers and drawers, the tops of them serving as seats, ran down each side, with a gangway between them from the door to the bed, the row of lockers being broken on the one side by a hanging cupboard of the whole height of the interior, and on the other by a bulkhead, both of these being of the same width as the lockers, and so, with a curtain drawn between them across the gangway, serving to shut off the bedroom portion from the remainder of the interior at night. Next the doorway was the pantry cupboard, with the double paraffin cooking-stove on it, on the one side, and on the other the grocery cupboard, on the top of which was the sink, with its outlet directly above the rear front wheel into the open air, and over the sink the water-cistern with a tap. The washing-basin, which was of enamelled iron, also fitted into this sink, and when not in use was hung up to the ceiling over the cistern. The looking-glass was placed on the front of the cistern over the washing-stand sink.

Those seem to me to be all the fixtures which I need describe for immediate purposes, and I think I shall have succeeded in giving anybody who cares to read this book a very tolerable general idea of what the Escargot was like. Peggy always says that I never can describe anything; but

as I believe she bases her indictment solely on the fact that I am not always as capable as she would like of taking home to her an accurate and minute description of any particular lady's attire whom I may have met at some garden-party which I have had the misfortune of attending alone, I don't think it is entirely a just one.

But then there were of course a quantity of things of a more movable description which we had to get for ourselves. Blankets and sheets, &c., for the bed, were of course forthcoming from our ordinary domestic stores: for a counterpane we had a plaid of Peggy's ancestral tartan, which served also in the daytime to disguise the true meaning of the couch-like arrangement at the back: curtains and cushions Peggy and her handmaids, whose one cause of discontent for the time being was that they were not coming with us, made out of art serge and other suchlike materials, whose nature is untreatable too particularly by man. Our plates, dishes, and saucepans were chiefly of enamelled iron; but we could not reconcile ourselves to the idea of enamelled iron teacups, so we had them of china to start with, which however gradually degenerated into stoneware: our glasses, owing to the same prejudice, were of glass. We took six of each variety of spoon, as also of forks and knives: there were also various wonderful inventions, which I fancy are to be found in every well-regulated kitchen, but with which I had never till then had so close an acquaintance, for whisking and slicing and laddling. We had an earthenware teapot and a tin coffee one, and two enamelled iron water-jugs. All the crockery, so-called and real, was carefully arranged to make the minimum of noise and to experience the minimum of risk—that is, as we supposed before we started would have had that effect, but which arrangement had to be

modified from time to time during the journey. However, for the most part we found it successful as regarded the more essential details: the dishes and saucepans were packed in the pantry cupboard, with felt-covered battens nailed between them to prevent them rattling; the plates were strapped tightly in sets of three against the roof; the cups were hung on hooks fixed on the partition bulkhead on one side, with the saucers in wire racks just below them, and the glasses fitted into sockets in a shelf on the other side. We had two lamps to start with, one an ordinary hurricane lantern which served both for inside and outside use, and the other a piano lamp heavily weighted at the base so as not to be easily knocked over, and which stood on a bracket with raised edges close to the sink. I provided myself also with a complete set of joining tools, and one or two besides that I believe are generally connected with the housebreaking profession, but which I was told were indispensable with a structure like our caravan, which eventually proved to be the case; and a revolver with which I practised assiduously for some days previous to our final departure from our home at my cowhouse door, and attained a certain degree of proficiency, sufficient at any rate to enable me to speak with confidence with my enemies at the door of the *Escargot*, should any chance to present themselves. And we took a box full of medicines of a more or less homely character, suitable for the emergencies of travel.

We had also a patent filter which I shall not name, for fear of having some of those people who always know everything asserting that I have received a £100 cheque from the maker for the advertisement; but if it should afford him any gratification, and he remembers a certain

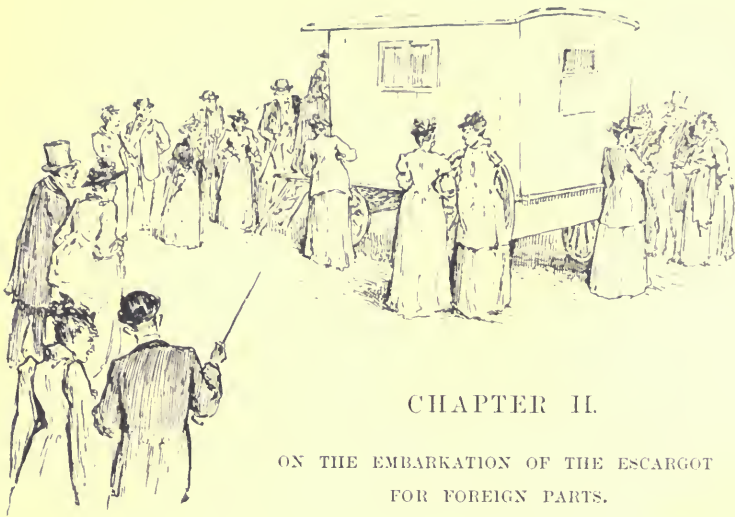
individual of not altogether unprepossessing appearance coming to his shop and buying a filter and asking a lot of questions about how to work it, and otherwise generally displaying his ignorance, I am that individual, and that was his filter. We bought two folding carpet-chairs and a folding table, which were strapped, when we were *en route*, on the top of the bed: the table, however, was not altogether a success, as it took up such a lot of room, and we eventually gave it up for a simpler plan devised by our predecessor, which will be described later on. Last, but not least, we had an alarm-clock of something like four-horse striking power. And when Peggy had put up a few photographs and fans and knickknacks on the walls, and I had contributed my pipe-rack and tobacco-jar to the general ornamentation of the premises, the interior of the Escargot looked as snug and homelike as could be desired.

Our harness was modelled after the fashion of that used by the bus companies—viz., simply traces with back-strap and girth, and with chains and hooks to attach them to the splinter-bar at the one end and the hooks on the hames at the other. The hames were horned, so as to fit any sized collars that we might have to get for our horses when we had bought them. We carried two stable-buckets, a corn-measure, two nose-bags, halters, and a couple of corn-sacks in the fodder-box, and a spade and a wooden pitch-fork on the roof of the caravan: as also a ladder, which we found there when we bought the Escargot, presumably for climbing up on to the top; but as one had to get up before one could get the ladder down, it struck me at the time as being, as it afterwards proved to be, rather superfluous.

I have given all these minute details in case any one

else may take it into his—or her—head to go caravanning, and they may be of use to him—or her. Peggy says I ought to have put them into an appendix, but I think it is kindest to spare my readers the shock of finding an appendix awaiting them when they get to the end of this book. If they don't want the details, they are at perfect liberty to skip them.





CHAPTER II.

ON THE EMBARKATION OF THE ESCARGOT FOR FOREIGN PARTS.

I CANNOT conscientiously assert that we were allowed to carry out our preparations entirely without interruption: nor have I any just grounds for complaint that we did not meet with any sympathy from our friends and neighbours in the project which we had undertaken; on the contrary, we met with a lot, but it was not precisely the kind of sympathy that we courted, rather taking the form of pity as it did for two poor misguided fellow-creatures who didn't know any better, and ought if possible to be dissuaded from our enterprise. When we had first announced to the said friends and neighbours that we were going to travel abroad in a caravan, I think they were rather inclined to treat it as a harmless though somewhat unnecessary joke; but when the Escargot herself arrived, and stood there a stern incontrovertible reality in our stable-yard, then there arose a flutter in our quiet little rural dovecot such as rarely disturbs it more than once in a quarter of a century, or anyway, lest I should be

proved to have exaggerated, a decade. The only occasion that I can recall on which the excitement in any degree resembled it, was the appearance of the lady of the manor's fifth baby, which I believe was rather unexpected; at least, I remember concluding so at the time, when I was a boy at Eton home for my holidays, because, being a boy of an observant turn of mind somewhat beyond my years, I had remarked that babies who came to our village were, as a rule, tolerably well advanced in weeks, or even in months, when they did so, and arrived by train from London.

I don't think we have ever had so many people in to see us in the same space of time as we had in the fortnight succeeding the advent of the Escargot. And they all had something to say. I don't wish to have it supposed that I didn't know that they did it for the best, and that I bear any of them the smallest ill-will for it, but I must say that it was not for want of cold water thrown at it that our ardour for our expedition was not quenched out at the very beginning. Everybody seemed to think that he or she, as the case might be, was charged with a special mission to deter us from our purpose with some objection: we certainly reaped this benefit from their counsel, that there were very few weak points, either in the caravan herself or her equipment, left for us to find out for ourselves on the road, and very few accidents or mishaps which could occur and which we could afterwards declare had been unexpected. But to our main point we held firm: we intended to go, and if we still liked caravaning when we had done it we would let them know. And so they eventually gave us up as a bad job; and when all was ready, we said our Good-byes to them all in the friendliest of manners, and they returned them: but we couldn't help noticing that they all supplemented their farewells with an "I hope you'll enjoy

yourselves," with a peculiar stress on the "hope" that clearly showed that they didn't in the least expect that we would.

I had made all arrangements with the General Steam Navigation Company for shipping the Escargot over to Bordeaux, and I had likewise chartered our local coalman to hold himself in readiness to horse her, when the time came, up to London. We experienced a delay of a week owing to a dock-strike which broke out at that time, but at last I got the expected telegram from the head office of the Company to say they were ready for us: I forwarded the news to the coal-merchant, and at ten o'clock precisely on the night of Tuesday the 19th of November we—that is, myself and one of the coal-merchant's men; Peggy had gone up to London to stay with some friends and get some "things"—left my stable-yard, and set out in the direction of the Metropolis in the Escargot. Through the silent village, and past the coal-yard, where the coal-merchant and his wife, the only people visible, were standing with lanterns to see us go by, and wish us Good-speed; and past the last house out on to the main road. It was a cold and foggy night, calculated rather to provoke shivering than thought; but still I couldn't help thinking to some extent of all that might happen before I came back by that way again.

The journey to London was not very productive of incident: the road is very straight all the way, and at no time very interesting, and it was particularly uninteresting in the pitchy blackness of that night. We travelled chiefly at a walk, as the horses had already been about twenty miles, off and on, carting coals in the course of the day; as had also the coalman: so after we had gone a little way, I relieved him at the reins, while he retired into the interior to take a snooze, which lasted till I had twice driven off the road,

and only just missed going into the ditch, on which he declared himself perfectly refreshed, and resumed his original post. I found him a most intelligent man—as the newspaper reporters say, though why they should take it for granted, as they seem to imply, that the average individual whom they have anything to do with is not to be expected to be intelligent, I don't know—and he put me up to a lot about horses, and I had the consolation of learning that, as a rule, they don't get more than three things the matter with them at a time. And so proceeding and conversing we came to Hounslow, where we pulled up at a night-house to bait for an hour and a half. We put the nosebags on to the horses, and went ourselves to have a cup of tea and a warm by the fireside in the house, where my companion introduced me to a select circle of Covent Garden waggons who had halted there for the same purpose as ourselves. One would perhaps suppose, from what one sees, and hears, of him in the crowded streets of London in the daytime, that the Covent Garden waggoner is by nature rather a rough customer; but I must say, from my personal experience on that occasion of the good-nature and primitive civility that prevailed amongst our circle, not only towards myself as a stranger, but between its habitual constituents, that to my mind he compares favourably with a good many people who consider themselves his betters, who may find themselves compelled to be up and doing at two o'clock in the morning.

We got under weigh again about half-past three: the houses grew up thicker and thicker on each side as we passed through Brentford, Hammersmith, West Kensington, and Kensington, and then we had the railings of the Park on our left. Along Kensington Gore and past the Albert Hall and into Knightsbridge; past Hyde Park Corner, and down

and up again along Piccadilly; then to the right down the Haymarket, through Trafalgar Square, and by Northumberland Avenue to the Embankment: all this by the flickering light of the gas-lamps, and with no one about the streets but an occasional night wanderer, or perchance some early toiler going to find the first work; or a policeman who stared silently at us, perhaps reflecting whether he ought to come and inquire what we were up to, but eventually deciding to leave it to his comrade on the next beat: not even the matutinal milkman was yet astir. Along the Embankment to Blackfriars, and then up Queen Victoria Street to the Mansion House Station; down Cannon Street past King William's statue, and along Eastcheap and Great Tower Street. Day was beginning to dawn through the fog now, and here there were more signs of life; innumerable carts drawn up with their hind wheels against the pavement on either side, making it difficult to pass along the narrow passage left in the centre of the roadway without inflicting severe contusions on the noses of the horses. Why all these carts? one felt inclined to ask; and then one began to reflect that there is a great deal that goes on in London which one has to get up very early to see. Out on to Tower Hill and across to the Mint, and here were assembled countless drays all loaded up, and on their way either to or from the Docks; and here we paused again to ask the way to St Katharine's Wharf.

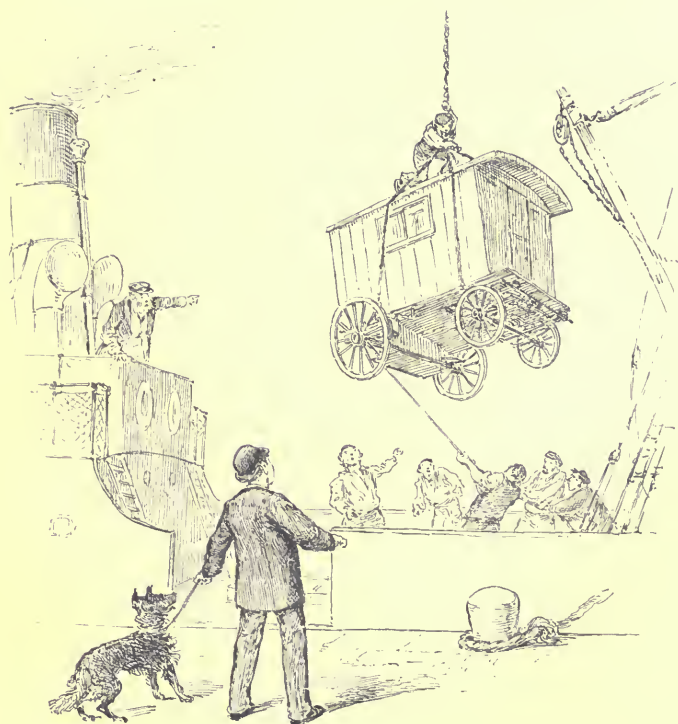
We were some little time before we could find out, as the first two or three people we asked were strangers in those parts: it is a curious fact, I have noticed, that a large proportion of the people one meets about in the East End, indeed I think I may say the majority, are invariably strangers in those parts, at least whenever you happen to ask them the way to anywhere: and meanwhile a considerable crowd

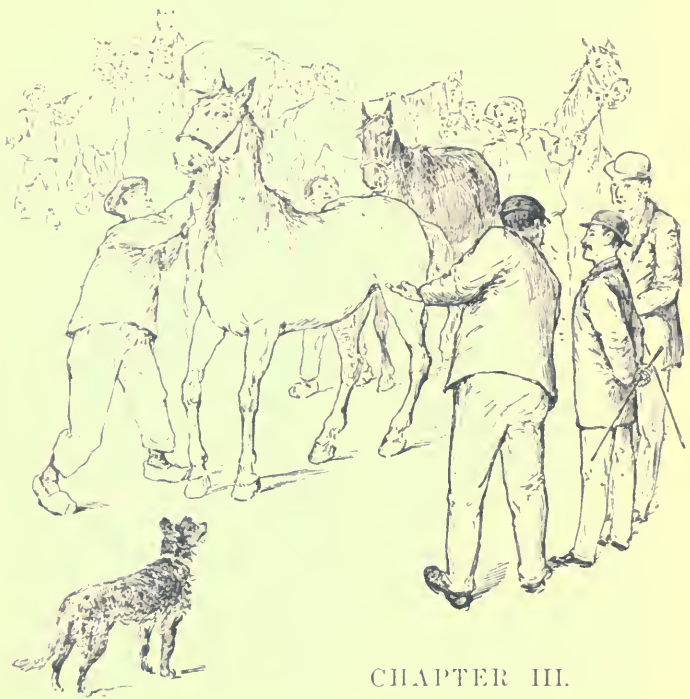
collected, which commenced speculating as to what we were and what we were doing there: the general conclusion came to, as I gathered from their remarks on the subject, being that we were part of Barnum's show, which had landed a few days previously, gone astray. But at last a gentleman in a hat that once might have been a billycock, and a blue jersey and a pair of corduroys, but with a singular absence of linen about his attire, volunteered to show us the way. He addressed me somewhat familiarly as "young man," which at first I resented inwardly, till I reflected that perhaps one might expect to have to put up with that sort of thing sometimes in a caravan, and after all it was not quite so familiar as "old man"; so I left off resenting; and meanwhile he had hauled himself up on to the footboard beside me, and we were preparing to resume our route. A number of the strangers in those parts tried to climb up too, presumably with a view to acquiring information so as to be able to direct the next inquirer; but our new ally fought them all off, and turning down a very narrow lane, which was made still narrower by the preparations for the New Tower Bridge, all the traffic, however, being fortunately bound in the same direction as ourselves, we arrived at last at our destination at half-past seven A.M. precisely.

We took the horses out, and the coalman went away in search of a stable to give them an hour or two of rest before taking them home again. I handed over the *Escargot* to the wharf authorities, and went to the friends where Peggy was staying, and to bed.

When I next saw the *Escargot* she was hanging between the firmaments at the end of a long chain, being slowly lowered on to the deck of the good ship *Albatross*. I had gone down to the wharf on the morning of the *Albatross's*

sailing to take James on board, as he was to go out to Bordeaux by sea too. I am not habitually of a nervous disposition, but I couldn't help wishing I hadn't arrived at that particular moment, for it seemed inevitable that something must give way, and our future home be dashed into a thousand fragments. But all went well, and I breathed again; then I delivered James into the charge of the cook, and returned on shore. The last rope was let go; the Albatross slowly moved away from the wharf, and I felt that the expedition had really begun!





CHAPTER III.

OF OUR TRANSACTIONS AT BORDEAUX.

THE Albatross with the Escargot and James on board sailed on the Friday; Peggy and I followed on the next day, spending the Sunday in Paris, and going on by the *rapide* which reached Bordeaux on the Monday night. The preliminary part of the journey was not unaccompanied with adventure, though it was quite of an uncaravanlike kind, and might have happened to any ordinary travellers; consisting, first, of our missing the night train on Sunday, through the stupidity of our hotel-porter, who, after he had shut us into our cab, directed the driver to the wrong station; and our

consequently having, when we had eventually arrived too late at the right station, far away from anywhere where the English explorer had ever penetrated before, to put up for the night in a respectable though somewhat primitive Surrey-side kind of pothouse—where a gentleman in a blouse performed the functions of proprietor, *femme de chambre*, boots, and as far as we could tell, cook as well—for fear of missing the morning *rapide*, which was like all French trains which run at anything over fifteen miles an hour, making a point of either starting just when every respectable person would be thinking of going to bed at night, or else before said persons would be thinking of getting up in the morning. And secondly, when we had got on board the *rapide*, the engine broke down when we were only half-way to Orleans, and we had to wait two hours for another to be sent to tow us, collapsed engine and all, out of our difficulty; and then this succouring engine, having presumed to be tasked beyond its powers by the extra weight thus put upon it, broke down in its turn about twenty miles from Bordeaux: so that altogether, instead of arriving at our destination at half-past seven in the morning, according to our original programme, we didn't get there till a quarter to nine at night. The weariness and vexation of spirit caused by all this delay was not materially diminished by the knowledge that the Albatross was expected in Bordeaux about mid-day on the Monday, and that while we were thus kicking our heels in the train all sorts of things might be happening to the Escargot if she had been shot out on to the quays, a friendless, homeless caravan with no one to claim her.

However, as things turned out, our fears proved groundless. I took Peggy to a hotel, and while dinner was getting ready I rushed down to the quay to find out anything that I could

about our missing habitation. There was only one man, a kind of dock policeman, down there at all, but he told me to my great relief that the Albatross had not arrived; and further, having something to do with the signals, he was in a position to tell me that she had not been heard of since leaving the Thames. Next morning I learnt at the General Steam Navigation Company's Agency that almost immediately after leaving the wharf at London a heavy fog had come down upon her, and she hadn't got out of the Thames till late on the Saturday; and as there was another fog waiting for her at the mouth of the Garonne, there seemed very little prospect of her arriving for two or three days to come at the very least.

Nor did she. But meanwhile we had plenty to occupy ourselves with. Everybody in the G. S. N. Co.'s office knew about the Escargot somehow — presumably by telegraph: the officials at the London headquarters had taken a warm interest in us and our expedition when we were arranging for the transit, and this when translated into French was of course much warmer; in fact it might almost be styled vehement. Everybody in that Agency had something to say on the subject; and then when they had said it, I was formally introduced to the special clerk who was to see me through the custom-house, and perform all the necessary ceremonies for introducing so doubtful a piece of goods as a caravan into France.

We had two letters of introduction, both to eminent wine-merchants of Bordeaux, and after I had finished at the Agency, and been back to breakfast and to pick up Peggy, we lost no time in going out and presenting them. There were faint symptoms on the part of our new friends of a desire to persuade us to cry off even at this advanced stage of the

proceedings; but when we had shown ourselves firm,—a new motive for our being so having of course now developed itself in the consciousness of how foolish we should look if we turned back now we had come so far; that was, always allowing that the Escargot had not gone to the bottom with the Albatross in the fog, or been pitched overboard as the Company had reserved the right to do in case of dirty weather,—then they entered, or anyhow, which did just as well, pretended to enter, heart and soul into our plans, and volunteered their assistance in every way that they could. I wish here to record, as far as possible, our united everlasting gratitude to them for the unflagging kindness which they showed to two, to them, comparatively unknown wanderers: it is space, not inclination, that is wanting, to prevent me from saying all we should like to. And I am not sure that we ought not to feel doubly grateful, in that, up to the very last they saw of us, I believe they cherished the impression in their inmost heart that we were not altogether in our right minds.

When we had thus paid our first calls and met with this hearty welcome, and discussed certain matters with them relative to the furtherance of our proposed progress through the country, till we felt we had sufficiently intruded ourselves upon them for a beginning, we made appointments with our friends for a time when they would have more leisure from business, and went on to see if we couldn't do something towards our horses, so as to save time by having them all ready when the Escargot did arrive. We had had the address of a retired English coachman given us, who had set up in business as a *cafetier* on the quays: to him I had written beforehand to ask him to have a few samples ready, and now I went to find him and see what he had done for us. Peggy went back to the hotel to write some letters. I found

our fellow-countryman, who told me he had been doing his best for us, and took me round to two stables to show me some of the kind of things that he thought would suit us. I had read up a good deal as to the way one should behave when one goes to see a horse, and I think I acted up to instructions fairly well; but I concluded it would be best not to decide till I had seen some more, and having made an appointment with our agent for the morrow, I rejoined Peggy, and we spent the afternoon doing some of the sights of Bordeaux. We polished off a fair amount of them, including a set of people who had died some centuries ago, but had been preserved in some way, and stuck up in a row against the wall of a church vault instead of being decently interred like respectable citizens: not entirely uninteresting, but for the most part ghastly. In the evening we dined with our new friend No 1, and his equally kind-hearted wife. The dinner was excellent, and so were the wines, and I picked up a good deal of miscellaneous information on the subject of the manufacture of the latter; but as the 'Encyclopaedia' will probably give the details far better than I should, I shall not repeat them here.

There was still no news of the Albatross when we inquired at the office next morning. Peggy went back to the hotel to write more letters; it is strange what a number of letters one can write when one has nothing particular to do—I suppose it is in some way connected with the qualms of conscience; and I went with my coachman friend to look at some more horses. Good news travels fast; and it had evidently got abroad somehow among the horse-dealers and livery stable keepers of the city that an Englishman of tolerably innocent appearance was on the look-out for horses; and I visited that day, in company with my adviser, about fifteen

different stables, large and small, and I should say interviewed all the old screws in Bordeaux. I had told my agent that I wanted something of a respectable age, as more likely to be quiet, but the majority of the quadrupeds produced in this round were palpably too venerable; any four of them taken together could have counted their sixty summers between them, and some individuals among them could have very nearly done so without any assistance: so having commended my agent for his rigid attention to my general directions, I gave him more particular ones for his further guidance, fixing the standard at somewhere about six years old, so as to avoid at any rate the necessity of having to carry a feeding-bottle amongst our stable furniture, and told him to try again. That evening we dined with our friends No. II, and passed another most pleasant evening.

The Albatross had at last arrived in the river when we called in for news on the third day, but had missed the tide, and so couldn't come up till early the following morning. Our hopes being thus raised, we went on to our host of the preceding evening, according to an arrangement which he had made with us to help us through a difficulty which had newly arisen—at his suggestion. It appeared that to ensure our safe passage through the less frequented districts which we would have to traverse, we would require a certificate of respectability from some one in authority; the general opinion being that that some one was the Préfet of Bordeaux. I must own that the suggestion was rather a shock to our feelings: apart from the fact that I had provided myself with a passport with the Lion and Unicorn in all their glory at the top of it, and a great deal about Lord Salisbury and a very little about Peggy and myself underneath, which, like an English bank-note,

ought to have carried us anywhere, our respectability was a thing which it had never so much as occurred to us to question, and we felt somewhat hurt at the bare possibility of anybody else doing it for us: but on consideration we reflected that, in the first place, we were going to places that mightn't, in the received sense of the word, be counted as anywhere; and secondly, that we were going to be caravan people, and it was just probable that some of the less enlightened aborigines of the interior might feel uneasy about their hen-roosts till they had had the advantage of a more than merely visual acquaintance with us. So we had gulped down our pride, and accepted our friend's offer of his managing clerk to see us through the business.

The managing clerk was all ready for us; but with Peggy as interpreter, we got to understand each other perfectly; and besides that, he knew exactly what he had been told off to do for us beforehand, which saved quite seventy-five per cent of preliminary conversation. So we lost no time, and left the office at 11.30. We couldn't find the Préfet of Bordeaux, because, as was only naturally consistent with the dignity of his station, he wasn't at the Prefecture; he had gone into the country for the chase: but after exploring the building from cellar to garret, and making our way into several wrong offices, and being mistaken for intending emigrants, and parents of convicts wishing to take a last farewell of their erring sons before they were shipped off to New Caledonia, and for parties about to marry, and for a lot of other things, we at last found the right clerk, and our interpreter made him a long oration all about what we had come for; to which, after he had listened attentively throughout, he replied that it

was an affair of which he could not take the responsibility, and we must go to the Commissary of Police.

It was then one o'clock, and we began to feel that we wanted some luncheon. However, we determined to persevere, and went off to the east end of Bordeaux to the Central Police Station, where, on endeavouring to effect an entrance by the main door, we were told by the soldier on guard that we couldn't go in there, as the Commissary was holding a party, and we must go round by the side-door. I took the opportunity of running into a pastry-cook's shop on the way and purchasing a franc's worth of biscuits. We found the side-door, but it was the wrong one, and we plunged into the guard-room where the portion of the police who were off duty were eating their lunch. One of them rose, however, and put us back again into the right track, when our guide had explained all over again what we wanted, through another door at the back, which he shut behind us immediately we had passed through. There was only one other door out of the yard in which we now found ourselves, so we made for that, and came to a passage with three more doors. Our guide knocked at one of these, and a man put his head out and told us we must wait till they had finished what they had on hand in there just then. So we sat down on the edge of a coal-box which was in the passage, and waited. Time, 1.30 P.M.

We ate all our biscuits, and wished we had brought some more, the more especially that a very appetising savour of beef-steak and onions made itself apparent through that door. There was not much to amuse ourselves with in that passage: one of the doors was studded with nails—perhaps it was a cell; there were three hundred and fifty-seven nails in it;

Peggy said there were three hundred and seventy, but I think I was right—three hundred and fifty-seven. And at a quarter past two there came a rattling, which might have been chains, but which sounded more like plates; and then the man put his head out again, and told us we might come in. There were two other men seated at desks in a very small room, about twice the size of a ship's cabin: our guide rushed at one, who referred him to the other, and he poured forth the whole of our history for the third time. Then the man said it was not a matter for him at all, and we must go to the Maire.

By the time we reached the Mairie, which, as far as I could locate it, lay at the extreme other end of the town, it was just twenty minutes past three, and being the Maire's *jubilé* day, or some other equally important public anniversary, they were just preparing to celebrate the occasion by putting up the shutters with a view to an early closing. But I think our conductor was beginning by this time to feel as desperate as ourselves: he seized on the first clerk we came across, got between him and his hat, and refused to let him leave that place till he had granted us our desire. The official covered beneath his vehemence, and reluctantly admitted that it was in his power to do something for us, but we must first take our passport to a sworn translator, get him to turn it into French, and then bring it back to be witnessed and stamped by the Maire. So we let him go, and went on our way to find a sworn translator. We found one under the arcade of the Opera-House: he was a very agreeable little man, in appearance something like Romeo's apothecary, and promised not only to have the translation ready in two days, but also to get all the necessary witnessing and stamping done for us: so we left our

passport in his charge, and departed rejoicing. Then it was half-past four. We thanked our guide all we could for his trouble, which he said was quite unnecessary, as he was sure we would have done the same for him. I hope so devoutly.

All this may perhaps be useful to any one who may be going caravanning in France, and may want to know what to do. Of course if he likes to gain an insight into the different phases of official life in France, he can go through the whole course as we did; but I don't think I should. Our passport was returned to us at the time promised, duly translated and signed and stamped. A passport is a somewhat obscure document even in its native state, but when shrouded in French it assumed an aspect sufficiently mysterious to overawe any country policeman; indeed things seemed to have got so much mixed up in it that we couldn't tell which was Lord Salisbury and which was ourselves.

That evening we recreated ourselves with five and a half hours of 'L'Africaine' at the Opera.

Next day was very cold and drizzly, almost as good as anything we can do in that line over on this side of the Channel. I got up early and went down to the quay, and this time I was not unrewarded for my trouble. There, alongside the quay, lay the Albatross, with a crowd of dockers round her—all, a somewhat strange sight for English eyes, with their umbrellas; and the cynosure of their wondering eyes was our Escargot, which the stevedore's men, also all with their umbrellas—and it was wonderful how they managed them while carrying on their work, without the aid of a prehensile tail—were engaged in slinging preparatory to her disembarkment. Some of them were caracolling about

rather recklessly on the roof, seriously imperilling thereby the intactness of the battens of the false canvas roof, not to speak of the risk of their making holes in the canvas itself; but a word to the stevedore, who fortunately spoke very good English, as I hadn't the remotest idea what the French for either canvas or battens was, sufficed, and in a voice of thunder, and with a good deal of what might have shocked me if I had known what it was, he ordered them to come off at once. Then the winch clanked, and the chains shortened, and the slings tautened; the crane swung round; there was a slight graze of the corner of the roof as the *Escargot* hovered through the open gangway; then she dropped first on her hind and then on to her fore wheels, and was safe on foreign soil. The dockers rushed at her and cast off the slings, and pushed her up to the back of the quay, there to await the preliminary visit of the *douane*.

Then I went in search of James. He was in the stable, and did not seem any the worse for the voyage; on the contrary, he appeared to have enjoyed himself so much, that though he was heartily glad to see me and wanted to lick me all over, when the time came for me to take him away he was very much divided in his mind as to whether he would come with me or stay with the cook. However, he eventually decided in my favour. I had certain formalities to go through before I could remove him: first I had to ask the captain's leave; the captain was in bed, but he actually got up to come and give James a final pat. He said he oughtn't to let him go, because he was not in the manifest, whatever that might have been; but seeing it was I—and James; so agreeable did James seem to have made

himself on the voyage,—he conceded a point and consented, James wanted to lick him all over too. Then I had to take James to the *douane* and pass him through there, which I effected with the aid of my special General Steam clerk, who was all ready there to help me; and having satisfied them, first, that he was not a wolf—pure collies seemingly not being included in the French lists of the canine species—and secondly, that he had no spirits or tobacco concealed about him, I took him to the hotel, where, after he had knocked Peggy down in the excess of his joy at meeting her again, we gave him into the charge of the head-waiter, and he retired into the kitchen, at first reluctantly, till he got half-way down-stairs, and then the smell of the flesh-pots proved too strong for his better sentiments of filial affection.

Peggy and I went down again to the quay after breakfast for the preliminary functions of the *douane*, which were soon over, thanks to our faithful clerk. The *douaniers* climbed up the steps, took a cursory view round inside, asked if we had anything to declare, to which we replied in a tone of conscious innocence, "*Rien de tout*," at the same time brandishing our keys to show them that we were quite ready to open any of the drawers or lockers that they might like to inspect, and they expressed themselves satisfied and got down again. Our ally told us that the more serious part of the ceremony, the measuring and weighing of the Escargot, for those sort of things have to be paid by weight, and the most serious part, the paying, would not take place till the evening. I had been warned of all this to come by my predecessor in the caravan, and had taken careful measurements and approximate weights in English before we left

home, which, with the aid of a French dictionary appendix, I had occupied my leisure time whilst we were waiting at Bordeaux in rendering into metres and kilogrammes; so now we took the result of my calculations into the General Steam Office, and went off to fill up the interval with our other business.

Our ex-coachman had made arrangements for us to house the *Escargot*, when she arrived, at a livery-stable up at the back of the town, where there was a large covered courtyard and a riding-school, either of which would answer the purpose; so now, when I had dropped Peggy for a while at the hotel to continue her voluminous correspondence, I fetched him, and went with him to give directions to the livery-stable keeper to come and fetch the caravan when she had been formally passed by the Government officials. Then we went on to another stable, where there was another pair of horses on view—a lady and a gentleman—which seemed to a certain extent lucky, as Peggy and I had been discussing what we should call our steeds when we got them, and having in a kind of way made up our minds that they would be of the two sexes, had decided on Jeannette and Jeannot. These specimens were certainly not too young; quite over six—even my inexperienced eyes could see that—and rather inclined to run to bone; but they both had very respectable histories, according to their then owner, one having belonged to a marquis and the other to a duke; and it didn't seem unlikely that with better feeding than a handful of chaff and half a carrot a day, which was about what they looked as if they had recently been sustained on, they might fill out a bit; and they went very well in a trial trip which we made with them in a large brake be-

longing to the stable-keeper. So as the arrival of the Escargot had rather increased our anxiety to get our horses and set out on the road as soon as possible, I told their owner that I would send a vet round to look at them, and if he passed them, he could send them up to where the Escargot was to lie, and I would pay on delivery. Then I returned with the joyful news to Peggy.

We filled up the rest of the afternoon by taking James for a walk. We were twice reprimanded by policemen for taking about wild animals without a muzzle, and when I had put one on which I had been carrying in my pocket for fear of accidents, James's evolutions in trying to get rid of it—he coming from a county where such barbarities are unknown—created such a sensation amongst the old ladies and gentlemen, whose dresses and pantaloons (respectively) he tried to make use of to rub it off, that we were a third time accosted—this time by a uniformed swell on horseback; so we considered it advisable to postpone the rest of our promenade to some future occasion, and relegate James to his temporary lodging in the back-kitchen of the hotel.

At the appointed hour we set off to the Central Douane, where the Escargot was to be weighed, and arrived there just in time to see her being conducted along the quays by a single horse, who certainly didn't look as if he had the smallest inclination to bolt, but possibly was liable to do so—so deceptive are appearances—as there were our livery-stable man and two other men in charge to prevent such a catastrophe; two *douaniers* marched in front, and two more behind; and there was a miscellaneous bodyguard of volunteers, consisting of most of the loafers and small-boy

Bordelaises, in attendance. Peggy and I moved along in a parallel direction on the other side of the road, and pretended we didn't belong to the procession, till we arrived at the public weighing-machine, where the chief *douanier* called for the owner to come forward, and there was no help for it. We hesitated a moment, then advanced and boldly announced ourselves as the required parties. Sensation! Our General Steam clerk now joined us, and informed us that there had been some slight delay, as in my description which I had sent in for approval in the morning some of the measurements had been a few centimetres out, and there had been some discussion as to whether I oughtn't to be conducted to the confines of the country and put over them, caravan and all, for a fraudulent attempt to pass one caravan in while I had got a different one concealed somewhere about my person. However, all had been put right, and now we came to the final test.

But when the Escargot had been wheeled up to the *poids publique* it was found that she couldn't be weighed properly, by reason of her being about a foot and a half too wide to get all her wheels on to the weigh-bridge together. The *douaniers* were completely at a loss what to do: there was no other large weighing-machine in the town, and the caravan must be weighed; that was written in the Napoleonic Code, so there was no getting out of it. They retired and discussed the situation for a few minutes, and then the chief came back to me, and suggested the only way he could see out of the difficulty: I should pay them a small fee for the trouble they had already taken, and then take the Escargot back to the Albatross and ship her home to England again. I grieve to have to own that I so far forgot myself as to say

that I would be blowed if I would: however, it is to some extent satisfactory to know that Peggy didn't hear me, and the *douaniers* didn't grasp the full force of the idiom. Our clerk told me to stand firm, and so the deadlock continued for some ten minutes further: I certainly had right on my side, and for the time I had possession of the *poids publique*, and any other business couldn't be carried on till they had got me off again; but on the other hand, they had might on theirs, and though, if they turned me off, I could get questions asked in Parliament about it, and possibly a naval demonstration up the Garonne, yet that would of course take time, and it was an immediate settlement of the question that was imperative.

Meanwhile the crowd collected round in huger and huger proportions till it resembled a meeting in Trafalgar Square. I put Peggy out of sight into the interior of the Escargot, and stood with the clerk in front and looked at the chief *douanier*, and the chief *douanier* stood on the ground just below and looked at us. Then I laughed; and he laughed contagiously, though he did not yet know why I had laughed. I had bethought me of the lifting-jack in the fodder-box behind. I jumped down and went round to the back, and he followed me, suspecting maybe some nefarious intentions on my part; and the clerk came behind to see fair play. I opened the fodder-box, and pulling out the jack, showed it him. Then he perceived what I meant, and he almost yelled with delight: for after all, he was not a bad sort of fellow—only rather too tightly wrapped up in officialdom. I put the jack on the weigh-bridge and under one side of the caravan, and heaved at the handle; he rushed at it as it came round, sent it round again and again, and then I left him to do the

rest for himself, as he had got so enthusiastic about it that I didn't like to deprive him of the pleasure; besides, the jack was very oily, and I had my Sunday clothes on. Gradually the off fore and hind wheels rose from the ground till they were both a full six inches clear of it, and the whole weight of the Escargot was thus thrown on to the bridge. And the crowd, which before had been rather inclined to jeer at us in our straits, now came over in a body to our side and cheered.

I looked anxiously at the beam of the scale, as I had already been instructed that the duty payable was £2 for every hundred kilogrammes: the beam wavered a little, and finally settled down to 1850 kilogrammes. This sum-total was alarming, so in hopes of reducing it I represented that there was a lot on board the caravan that ought to be passed free; all our linen, for instance, and the clothes we had sent over in her, &c., &c.; in which the chief *douanier*, who had now become quite amiable, acquiesced. Accordingly in five minutes there was a chaotic heap of our household goods lying on the quay, with Peggy, who had also been weighed by mistake in the first instance, and one of the livery-stable men sitting on the top of it to guard it from the Bordelaises, who, however much they had appreciated our triumph, yet showed sufficiently suspicious symptoms of a desire to avail themselves of any opportunity offered them, to justify us in taking this precaution. But, alas! we could only wipe off the odd fifty kilogrammes this way; so we resigned ourselves to our fate, and when we had restored our belongings to the interior of the Escargot, and I had been into the office and authorised the General Steam clerk in writing to pay the necessary amount for me, I was told we were free to go whither we

would within the borders of fair France for the space of three years; and provided we cleared ourselves and ours out of the country within that time, they promised to return the money: which didn't look as if they were anxious to keep us.

Then the Escargot was taken off to her moorings, and we returned to our hotel.



CHAPTER IV.

OF OUR FURTHER TRANSACTIONS AT BORDEAUX.

WE paid our bill at the hotel the next—the Saturday—morning, and drove up to the stable-yard with James and the rest of our paraphernalia to take up our quarters in the Escargot, and get shaken down into her, so to speak, before we really set off on our journey. The vet met us at the stables, and pronounced the horses sound, so far as he could see; so, as our agent was waiting up there too, in more or less of a state of anxiety as to the verdict—so he said—we sent him off at once to tell the dealer to send the steeds round; which he did with the utmost alacrity, sending a written warranty with them as to their soundness and capability for work.

Then we went back into town again, and bought a great many more what Peg said were absolute necessities—about as many, it seemed to me, as we had bought as positively last things to make everything complete before—for the journey; and on the way back to the stables we called on both sets of our friends and left P.P.C. cards, and then bought a franc's worth of ten-centime postcards, which we took home and carefully filled up with our route for the next three weeks

or so, with the principal places for our friends to send letters to, to wait for us—as we were intending to start on the Monday.

That night Peg cooked her first dinner—omelette and cutlets, a great culinary success, except that the omelette was shaken up, or stirred up, or whatever ought to be done to it, rather too much or too little, and so resulted in something rather more resembling buttered eggs *à la confiture*. We experienced some inconvenience from the stove, which I had not yet quite sufficiently mastered, and which entirely took charge on this occasion; smoking like—anything, and all over the place, and covering Peg and James and myself and all the other appurtenances of the *Escargot* with a fine black film, about the hundred and twenty-eighth part of an inch deep, which was perhaps all the more aggravating in that it was the sort of thing that one didn't perceive till one had removed it from the things it was resting on. We took off the first coat that night, and the rest next morning, getting up early for that purpose; but nevertheless, by the time I had transferred all the black of our household gods on to myself, and then from myself into the trough of the stable-pump, we had to give up all thoughts of church till the afternoon. After church we took the horses for exercise in the livery-stable keeper's training-brake, and they again acquitted themselves fairly well; so we turned in that night confident that the next bedtime would see us well away on our journey.

But it didn't: nor did the next evening, nor the evening after that, nor indeed the following Monday: it was not until the third Tuesday after going on board the *Escargot* that we ultimately left Bordeaux. I would I could conscientiously pass over the events of that extremely humili-

ating period: it is of course a great deal better to have been a fool than a knave; but still nobody, except perhaps on the spur of the moment and immediately after the event, likes to acknowledge that he has been made a fool of: and it is only a stern sense of duty towards all other intending caravanists that compels me here to state that on that particular occasion at Bordeaux I was made an out-and-out fool of, without the smallest mistake about it.

The astute reader will probably have guessed already that the elementary factors of this folly were the horses; and the astute reader, as usual, is right. To cease beating about the bush, then, and to go straight to the centre of matters: though I had bought more than one horse, or pony, as the case might be, before that, and had invariably suffered in the process, to the extent of losing at least a third of my money when I sold them again, owing to some elaborate and unsuspected defect in them that had escaped everybody's notice except the buyer's, yet I had never had such an unpromising pair of screws palmed off on me before. On the Sunday afternoon, as I have already mentioned, we had them out in the livery-stable brake, and they had behaved very decently; on the Monday we were originally delayed in our proposed start by the collars which I had ordered for them not being ready; but to fill up time, we—that is, the livery-stable keeper, our agent, two stable-helpers, and myself—took them for another spin in the brake about ten o'clock in the morning. They accomplished a very fair trot this time, but they wouldn't do anything between that and a dead stop, which was inconvenient, as of course, when on our travels, we should want to do more walking than anything else. However,

on our return to the yard we gave them the chance of retrieving their character by putting them, with their borrowed collars, to the Escargot, whose weight, of course was not conducive to too much trotting; but under these circumstances they positively refused to move at any pace, or in any direction except backwards: that indeed they did with such goodwill that it really began to seem advisable to harness them in hind part before, had it not been that caravan travelling in itself was calculated to excite quite sufficient remark amongst the inhabitants of the more rural districts of the country, without adopting any such extraordinary methods of stimulating it. No amount of whipping or leading could induce them to go properly ahead; during the first attempt we steadily retrograded from the gate to half-way back along the yard; and when, after a pause of some minutes to give them an opportunity of thinking better of it, we made a second, it only ended in our bringing up short against the coach-house doors at the extreme back end, to the no small danger of its and the Escargot's paint. It was quite clear that I had been "had": I looked to our agent for an explanation, but he declared that he had never been so surprised in his life, and he had been in the horse-dealing line himself for over thirty-five years; and he took upon himself to begin to censure me for having paid the dealer before I had kept the horses for some little time, which, considering that I had done so on the understanding, from him, that that was the law, written or unwritten, in France, I thought was rather good.

However, there was only one thing to be done, and that was to get my money back, or else another pair of horses in exchange for these: preferably the former, as I had no

great ambition for going to the same dealer again. And then began a long course of complications, and deadlocks, and rumours of lawsuits, which might have ended in our having to spend all our money in said lawsuits, and perhaps all the time we had set apart for our journey, waiting as unheard suitors in Bordeaux, had it not been for the good—the more than good, the superhumanly benevolent—offices of our friend de L——. Never can we really express all that we feel towards him for his kindness; it was the one bright gleam shining out from amongst all the other blackness of our worry and trouble: we do like to dwell upon that; but for the rest—the sooner it is got over the better.

Well, we sent our agent off with our message, as above intimated, to the horse-dealer: that worthy returned no apology, nor any extenuation of his conduct, neither of which he seemed to consider in the least necessary; but as he did happen to have been found out, he would send round another pair of horses in exchange for the original failures as soon as possible. This he did next morning, having apparently spent the interval in going to the nearest knacker's yard and rescuing the first pair of old screws that he saw from their impending fate. This was rather too much for my feelings: the first pair may have been intended as an injury, but this second lot constituted a distinct insult. The man hadn't come round himself, but had sent a subordinate villain as caretaker to these interesting ruins, with instructions to leave them and take back the other ones; but it seemed to me that it would be best to secure as full compensation as possible for my wrongs, by keeping, at any rate, as much as I could get, if only to make up my loss by weight: so with the aid

of the livery-stable keeper and his men, the myrmidon was dismissed empty-handed, and I sent the agent round again to say that I must have my money back on the warranty.

The reply to this was that I might do my worst. The agent strongly advised me not to go to law, as being a highly dilatory if not disadvantageous proceeding; but I regret to say that I hadn't at this point the unbounded confidence that I had been led to believe that I might have at first—we will suppose, however, that he had erred from ignorance—and I had quite made up my mind to take my change out of the dealer somehow: so I went straight off to our French friend de L——, and laid our woes before him. He was surprised to see me again: at first thought that we had got tired of our journey, as he and his family had hinted that we would, and had come back cured of our temporary insanity already; but when I had explained to him what had happened, and asked him to recommend me a good lawyer, he fired up indignantly at the thought that we had been so disgracefully treated by his countryman, and declaring his intention of taking the whole matter into his own hands, put on his hat, and went straight off with me to beard the miscreant in his den, and force him to disgorge his ill-gotten gains. If the race of thieves has not died out in these days of universal enlightenment, neither, thank goodness, to be just, has the race of good Samaritans.

De L—— was the very man to help us if any one, for he was a great horseman himself, and scarcely a dealer in Bordeaux but knew him, and felt it incumbent on himself to keep in his good graces. The dealer was standing at his gate as we turned into his street, but disappeared

as soon as he saw us coming along; and when we turned into his yard, we were met by his wife, who told us he had gone to bed with a sudden attack of influenza. De L—— delicately asserting this to be what was not, and declaring that if her husband didn't recover pretty sharp he would have a commissaire in to effect the necessary cure, she eventually went up, and after an interval persuaded him to come down-stairs, very sulky, but still not in the least ashamed of himself, at any rate as far as conscience was concerned, for, saluting de L——, he at once apologised to him, and told him that if he had known that he was going to have anything to do with the late transaction, he would certainly never have attempted to cheat me in the way he had. De L—— then told him that he must return me my money, without any further attempts at compromise: this he said he couldn't do, as he had already spent it all; so then de L—— offered him till the next morning to think over it, and if he hadn't made up his mind to amend his offence by that time, I would take proceedings. And with that we left him.

De L—— came up to the stables, and I showed him our steeds: Peggy and I had a certain consciousness of pride about them, wrecks though they all undoubtedly were—as we had never before in our lives possessed four horses all at once—and he recognised one of the original pair as a discarded hunter of a friend of his, sound enough, but a noted jibber in the hunting-field, which naturally put his being *franc* in harness, as the warrant had said, completely out of the question. The mare had probably been worked in a gentleman's carriage at some time or another, but now that the first effects of her doctoring had worn off, was evidently not up to drawing the Escargot,

and at the same time her jibbing companion, along. De L—— had not seen the Escargot before, and I am glad to say that now, when he did, he almost came round to our view of the matter, and even seemed inclined to start off on a similar expedition himself.

However, to make a long, and painful, story as short as possible, the result of our ultimatum was that the dealer positively refused to do anything further towards the redress of his misdoings. De L—— went with me accordingly to his lawyer, and the next thing to be done was to hold a trial next day of the original pair before two witnesses of well-known probity; in which trial the horses behaved quite as they were wanted to do—viz., they stood perfectly still and declined to budge an inch either way this time. I was generous and threw in the alternative pair, to give the dealer the benefit of the doubt; but they were likewise perfectly immovable, from sheer inanition. Then we returned to the lawyer, and drew up an affidavit, or anyway the French equivalent for it, to that effect, and he remanded us till the following Monday. At the end of the appointed period, when we went to call upon him, however, he told us that he had been in the meantime making inquiries, and interposed the advice, which I consider was particularly disinterested on his part, that I should go no further in the proceedings, as he had discovered that the dealer was a man of straw, put up by other miscreants of a still baser sort; so that a trial, after probably keeping us in Bordeaux for perhaps three or four months, might only end in his being shut up, through inability to pay—which certainly would have been no more than his deserts, but wouldn't give me back my money. I must plead guilty to a certain want of public spirit on this occasion, but I really hardly saw that I was bound to

spend my holiday in bringing French swindlers to justice for them.

De L—— and his lawyer taking quite the same pusillanimous view of the matter as I did, the only course remaining was to get rid of my screws for what they would fetch, or give them in part payment for some new ones. Here again de L—— was of inestimable assistance to us: with him I spent the next week in making a second tour of stables in Bordeaux, but this time of a higher class than before. I found myself, though a quite recent arrival, one of the most famous persons in horse-dealing circles in Bordeaux; one or two of the dealers even went so far as to ask de L—— if he thought I could be taken in again as easily, but a glance from him soon convinced them that he, at any rate, was not to be trifled with; and I was now admitted into the inmost sanctums of the various stables, with the result that I began to have a considerably more favourable impression of the vendable horseflesh of Bordeaux than I might otherwise have taken away with me. The chief difficulty that we found in doing any business with them was the getting rid of the pair of white elephants that I had eating their heads off in the livery stable,—I had already, by the lawyer's advice, sent back the second pair, he being of opinion, though very reluctantly, that I had no right to keep them as a makeweight: two or three dealers with whom we had very nearly come to terms, when they had been up to look at my goods, fought shy of the bargain at that point, hinting that those sort of articles might be made to sell, but were certainly not made to buy; and I can't say that I very much wondered. But at last, after much perseverance, we came across a dealer who said, that seeing it was to oblige de L——, he would so far sacrifice his reputation for sagacity as to take them over from me

at just a third of the price I had given for them, on condition of my paying him the balance for a pair of fine-looking strong Breton mares which he had for disposal. De L—— approved of the mares, and so did his particular vet, and the mares themselves, when put to the Escargot, proved themselves capable of pulling her about quite easily; and so on the second Saturday after we ought to have started, the prospects of our expedition were considerably brightened, though at a most extravagant expenditure on the item of experience.

Meanwhile, however, we had not been altogether wasting our time in other ways during our enforced sojourn at Bordeaux; indeed there was some consolation, however small, to be gained from the fact that if it had not been for that enforced sojourn, we should have started on our journey only to find out a great many trivial defects in both our equipment and our method of managing it when it would have been less convenient to us to do so. It is very well to know how a thing ought to turn out theoretically, but it not at all unfrequently does turn out something very different practically. The livery-stable keeper and his wife were a very nice little couple, a gentleman's late coachman and lady's-maid, who had married and set up in business on their own account, and were very ready to help us in every way. I attended the stables chiefly in the intervals while de L—— recruited himself from his labours in my behalf with a spell of office work, and got a great deal of practical useful knowledge from little L—— the husband, in the care and management of the horse—my first pair, till I got rid of them, being suitable for experimenting on, if for nothing else. I also did a good deal of carpentering work of a lesser description, in the way of brackets, drawer partitions, &c., &c. Peggy set

herself to study cookery under the guidance of Madame L——, and not only mastered the art of *pot au feu* and other French luxuries, but, what was perhaps more useful still, became comparatively well versed in the tricks of the market, going out shopping with Madame every day with a view to learning how not to be imposed upon. James was very happy in the stable-yard, having found a donkey, which he regarded as his special property—he has one at home which doesn't do much besides play with him—and the two used to spend the whole day racing up and down the yard, playfully snapping at one another and tumbling over one another, much to the delight of the stablemen, who passed a good deal of their time—French stablemen generally seem to have plenty of time too—in watching them and encouraging them to further antics. The two started off on an excursion into the town on their own account one day, the donkey having no doubt volunteered to show James round; but their absence was speedily discovered by the stablemen, and they were brought back ignominiously before they had crossed the nearest square.

But the chief thing which we discovered, and we were very glad we did so, was—well, not exactly the necessity, but the advisability, of having a man or boy to assist us in our various work. What with the cooking, and the cleaning, and the looking after the horses, it appeared very evident that if we did all of them entirely ourselves, we would have very little time left to enjoy ourselves: as soon as the morning routine had been got through, the afternoon one had to be begun, and when that was finished, we had to get to work on the evening one. And yet there are people who can't see that a servant's life is not the pleasantest life in the world!

We hadn't very far to go for an underling for our establishment. There was a fine broad-shouldered Pyrenean in



the yard, who was leaving on account of L—— finding that

he wanted to reduce his staff: we were first attracted towards this man by the magnificence of his voice while singing at his work, as was his habit: he chiefly affected operatic airs, and he rendered them in a way that, if cultivated, would have brought him a fortune on the stage—really. Then he in his turn took a great fancy to us, and was always doing us little services in a shy quiet way, till he really quite won our hearts: and our resolution to get a man and his arrangement to leave L.—coinciding, we proposed to him that he should come with us. He jumped at the idea, and immediately set to work to make preparations for coming. But there were unfortunately difficulties in the way: he revealed to us that he was the eldest son of a postmaster in the Pyrenean district, and till within a year before, he had acted as postilion to his father's horses, being excused from military service by reason of his being the *soutien de famille*; but he had left his house on account of a quarrel with his father, who would not consent to his marrying the girl of his choice; and of course by the law of France, being a mere stripling of thirty or thereabouts, he could not marry without his father's consent. Now, before he could go with us, he had to get leave and the proper papers from the Maire of his village—such are the glorious privileges of living in a free and enlightened Republic; and so he took his departure thither for that purpose, in the highest of spirits, for he was as much infatuated with the prospect of the journey as we were ourselves.

But alas for the free and enlightened Republic!—at least from the benighted and oppressed outsider's point of view—he returned in two days with a downcast countenance, reporting that the leave and the papers had both been refused by the Maire, on the ground that as *soutien de*

famille he must remain in his own village; indeed the Maire hadn't known till then that he had been away from his village, and had ordered his instant return on pain of imprisonment, with full military service to follow, for having violated the conditions of his exemption. We suggested that he would be sustaining his family as well, if not perhaps better, by coming with us, as there was an institution known as the Penny Post, by means of which he could perfectly well transmit a portion of or all his wages, if necessary, to his parents; but he had been bold enough to represent that to the Maire himself, and had been all but ordered off to solitary confinement at once, for presuming to argue with the authorities: no, the *soutien de famille* must live with his parents, even if he had to live on his parents, and he must be back in a week; so there was an end of it, and we had to give up all hope of obtaining poor Emile's services, greatly to our mutual regret. One good, however, arose out of it for him, which was that his parents were so frightened at the idea of their poor unprotected boy leaving them, either as a soldier or else to be carried off by wicked people in caravans, that as an extra inducement to his remaining at home they had consented to his marriage at the end of the next year, which was a considerable source of consolation; but he nevertheless would have preferred, he said, to have come with us, to earn some money really of his own during that year to start his married life with.

However, we had to fall back on another inmate of the yard, a boy named Joseph, who had been brought up as a jockey, but whose health had temporarily failed under the exposure of that life, and whom L—— and his wife had charitably taken in to live with them till

he should be all right again and get something to do. Peggy originally found him lying in the stable, all doubled up and in pain from rheumatism and other complications all over him, and had dosed him with ginger out of our medicine cupboard, with the most miraculous effects, as he got up there and then, and was never ill again, though we have reason to believe that it was as much from fear of the ginger as anything else. He was an overgrown youth of about sixteen, with a face all covered with smallpox: he, likewise, became devotedly attached to us, and L—— speaking very highly of him, and the doctor to whom we sent him having pronounced him perfectly sound, and likely to be considerably benefited by a trip to the south, we engaged him in Emile's place.

Then when we had called our new mares the Missus and Mary Ann respectively, the first because she had hitherto been serving in the horse-dealer's stable as instructor to the more wayward of her species who were destined to run in pairs, and the latter *par consequance* in contrast, we were really this time ready to start.

We had a little trouble with our agent, who came and demanded his commission, and was rather slow in being persuaded that we hardly saw where the commission came in on my having lost very considerably over the horses he had procured for me, and indeed threatened me with the terrors of the law; but I told him I would risk it, and I suppose he didn't think it worth while to carry out his threat, as I have heard no more about it from that day to this.

We dined the last two nights we were at Bordeaux with our two sets of friends, and said Good-bye to them

in firm confidence that it was really to be Good-bye this time; and may it be our turn some day to requite at any rate some of the kindness and hospitality that they had so disinterestedly bestowed upon us!

And here begins the Log of the Escargot.





CHAPTER V.

OF THE FIRST STAGE OF OUR JOURNEY—BORDEAUX TO MARMANDE.

Tuesday, Dec. 17.—Weather very dull. Our last pair of steeds having as yet shown no outward symptoms of incipient decay or disease, and there seeming therefore to be no just cause or impediment why we should not do so, we at last set forth this morning at 11.30 on our journey across France. L—, Emile, and Joseph were all with us on board: L— to start us fair from his yard-gates, Emile to pilot us along the boulevards, and Joseph, of course, as arranged, to accompany us to the end of our journey as groom, head bottle-washer, &c., as required. We left poor Madame L— at the door of her house in tears, though hoping we would not come back again too soon, which was meant well, but at first sight sounded a little odd. L—



EN ROUTE.

got down at the corner of the street, and wished us Good-bye and Bon voyage. The mares went splendidly along the boulevards, up and down the inclines, taking their collars beautifully. The shaking over the macadam, worn as it was by the town traffic, was very considerable, and we found it rather difficult to find our sea-legs: Emile and Joseph were on the foot-board driving; I was lurching about inside, making wild grabs at saucers, cups, clocks, and other miscellaneous items of our equipment, which had got loose, and were wandering promiscuously about the interior; Peg's first impressions of the Escargot in motion were something similar to those produced by crossing the Channel, and might have been more pleasant; James, who had been fastened for the time being inside, was in a great state of excitement at the indignity thus put upon him, and was shouting and crying and doing his best towards suicide by suspension from his chain: nevertheless, we were all ready to be in the highest spirits, and when the sun suddenly burst through the fog in all his splendour, leaving nothing to complete the good omens of our departure, we forgot all these little preliminary inconveniences, and agreed that caravaning was the most delightful form of existence that could be devised.

At the Route de Toulouse, Emile left us with final regrets, which we cordially reciprocated, that the stern, and, as they seemed to us, somewhat unreasonable dictates of his country's laws, did not allow him to come any farther. However, he gave us his card, and we have engaged ourselves to take him on the next caravan trip we make in this part of the world. At the present moment we feel as if we will never want to do anything but make caravan trips. The Route de Toulouse is apparently normally a very good road, but to-day we found it very thickly stoned. We passed the Eaux de Bordeaux

and Pont de la Mage, and so out into the open country. The scenery was not very striking at first: thoroughly French, a long straight road ahead of us, reaching away as far as we could see to a vanishing point in the distance, with rows of poplars planted with the regularity of telegraph poles on each side, and flat vineyards without so much as a hedgerow to relieve the monotony stretching away on either hand into the distance. We went along at an easy trot for some time, the motion being smoother, and the things inside getting more shaken down into comfortable travelling trim as we proceeded, and so giving us more time to thoroughly enjoy ourselves. The sun didn't last very long, but the fog was never thick enough to be unpleasant.

At the first real hill we came to we joined a kind of procession that the exigencies of the road had brought together at that point: first, a market-cart with two men in blouses in it; then a donkey-cart with a nice old lady sitting in it, on the top of her day's purchases, under a red umbrella; then ourselves; and behind us more donkey-carts with men in blouses, *ad lib.* Our fellow-travellers were all very friendly, and came round us, evincing a strong curiosity as to who we were, what we were "travelling in," and where we were going to. As they mostly talked *patois*, we told off Joseph to enlighten them: we are not responsible for any yarns he may have concocted for their benefit, but anyhow they seemed satisfied, and returned to their various charges. The old lady of the umbrella was particularly taken with Peg, who, she said, was the image of her grand-daughter at home, and made overtures, as far as we could understand her, to adopt her as a pendant to said grand-daughter on the other side of the family hearth: these, however, were respectfully but firmly declined. Eventually, we made a

spurt at the end of the hill and out-distanced the rest, taking with us the good wishes of all. We passed the first decipherable kilometre-stone, ten kilometres in the very fair time of one hour; then we made good going for the next six kilometres, the country here becoming prettier and thickly wooded—something like the New Forest,—and at 1.30 pulled up alongside the sixteenth kilometre-stone for lunch. We had omelette for lunch, plenty of it—about three ordinary restaurant portions to each—with appetites to match. The mares rather exercised our minds by their want of zest for their food; but Joseph was of opinion that it was only that they didn't like eating out of doors, so we are going to stable them for the future when possible. James found a bone by the side of the road, which, not being come by legitimately, he of course infinitely preferred to anything we had to give him.

We left a little after 2.30. We had some little trouble in starting, as the Escargot's two tons had been slowly settling into the soft ground during lunch, and it required a good pull to get her clear again. On through La Prade, a quiet little place, famous for nothing especial that we know of, except, perhaps, stones on this particular occasion. After passing it we came on a steam roller. The mares behaved quite well, and faced it as if they had been brought up in the same field with steam rollers all their lives. Castres, where we had originally intended stopping for the night, was a straggling little town with one street, one shop, a combined corn-chandlery and *pâtisserie*, and, as far as we could see, one inhabitant, the proprietor of the said shop, who came out to see who it was that was passing so obtrusively. We have to confess that, however hard we try, we can't help being to a certain extent obtrusive as we go along.

It being yet light, and the mares not in the least done, we decided to go on to Podensac for the night. The road became bad after Castres, narrower and with lots of stones. All day to-day has been alternately good road and bad stones. It is like the old story, "When it is good it is very very good, but when it is bad it is horrid."

Night began to set in when we had $5\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres farther to go. We lighted the hurricane lantern, but found it gave a very inadequate light, having no reflector; and we spent some very anxious moments over this last part of our journey, especially once where we had to cross the railway by a level crossing whose exit on the other side was some way up the line to the left, like the platforms of the old stations on the Great Eastern Railway, and we having made a bad shot off down to the right in the dark, nearly lost ourselves. Luckily no train came by, or either we or it might have come to grief—probably we.

We reached Podensac at six: 32 kilometres in $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours—not bad considering the stones. There seemed to be more inns than houses here, and we at first suffered from an embarrassment of choice, but finally selected the Hotel de l'Avenir, a homely pothouse sort of place. I can't help thinking it is a bad look-out for l'Avenir if this is the sort of hotel it is going to put up with: Peg, however, says, No, this is the Metropole of the future in its chrysalis state. Joseph proved invaluable. The proper public stables were full, but he blarneyed the landlady into letting us put our mares up in her private stable—really nothing but a shed with primeval litter kneaded together in a sort of paste on the floor, and a ladder fixed horizontally and at an angle along one wall to serve as a manger. The litter is all put into a pit dug out of the floor, so that all the

moisture of the stable drains down under the horse's feet. However, I looked into the other stable, and it is just the same, so I suppose the horses of the country are used to it. We are now drawn up in front of the inn amongst an array of market-carts, &c. We had leg of mutton and rice-pudding for dinner, with bread, and a bottle of wine which Joseph got from the hotel at forty centimes the bottle. I have tasted better at 18s. the dozen, and there is a suspicion of water about it, but nothing worse in the way of adulteration.

The Podensac band is at present practising on the other side of the Grande Place, of which the village, or town, whichever it calls itself, principally consists. The band is apparently in an early—a very early—stage of development, or it maybe is playing the music of l'Avenir. However, as Peg says, it is pleasant to feel in this the first night we have spent actually in the open in the Escargot that there are people about. For all we have seen, indeed, there might not be a soul. James is evidently, from his behaviour, under the impression that the band is cats. I have taken the front doorsteps inside for Peg's satisfaction, though they rather fill up our already somewhat limited space, and have a way, if one treads on the edge, of jumping up and hitting one on the shins; and we are just going to turn in, very tired, but much pleased at our first day's experiences of the road. James is to sleep on a mat just inside the door, if he will stay there. Joseph has secured a bed somewhere in the hotel.

Wednesday, Dec. 18.—Dull morning. Last night being Joseph's first taste of a bed for many months, said bed proved too much for him this morning and he overslept himself, and he having taken the alarm with him, so did we. Consequently

we didn't start at 6.30 this morning as we had righteously intended to do. When we did wake up, at eight, and looked out, all the carts were gone, and nobody seemed to be about in the village, all having probably gone to their work too. I let James out, who immediately rushed off in search of cats, and dressed and went in search of Joseph, taking a look in at the mares on the way. They looked none the worse for their rough quarters, but had evidently conceived very lofty ideas as to their proper share of the stables; for though, as a great favour, they had been accorded enough room the night before for three ordinary horses, by reason of their size, they had kicked down the poles which had been placed slantindicularwise from the manger to the floor to serve as partitions for them, and had annexed sufficient space for eight, the other three occupants of the stable having respectfully retired into the most distant corners. It was lucky the others weren't any of the carters' horses, and nobody seemed to have yet visited that stable, or there might have been disagreements. I rearranged them as best I could, and then having found Joseph and set him to feed the mares, went out to cater for breakfast, while Peg dressed and made the tea.

I went right round Podensac, which took me exactly four and a half minutes, before I found a baker, and when I found him, he couldn't understand me, and I couldn't understand him, as he spoke a different *patois* to what I learnt at school. However, I did gather enough from the ruins of our attempted conversation to learn that he only sold bread by the kilometre—not rolls: so it ended in my buying half a kilometre and carrying it home over my shoulder like a ladder—fortunately I met nobody round the corners—and arrived there just at the same time as Joseph with the milk from the hotel and breakfast was ready. After we had had our breakfast

and the mares had digested theirs, and we had paid our hotel bill, one franc seventy-five centimes all included, we put the mares to, collected James, who had apparently breakfasted out—James as yet has not cost us much for his keep,—and left Podensac at 10.15.

The roads were much the same as yesterday, only rather worse. We were hardly out of Podensac when we came on an immense embankment of stones deposited some thirty or forty deep right across the road for a full hundred yards, with a steam roller waiting at the other end to mount on them and crush them down to the proper level. We made a bold dash at the obstacle, got all four wheels well on to it, and there stuck, as hard aground as any one could wish not to be. There were six men in attendance on the roller, and five of them very kindly came to our aid; the sixth, who was in charge of the machine itself, made signs to us that he would have come too, but he was afraid of leaving his engine, lest it should take fright at the Escargot. Joseph took the reins; I went to the mares' heads, and the men arranged themselves about the wheels and body of the Escargot, and when we were in our appointed places we all said "Hoop!" and did all we could: the Escargot moved forward about a foot, wavered, and then fell back into the hole she had made for herself amongst the stones. Then we all said "Hoop!" again, and this time we made a little permanent advance; and finally, after about a quarter of an hour's saying "Hoop!" and shoving on our part, and pulling on the mares', we landed safely on the open road on the other side. The men reversed the usual order of things, and wanted to stand us a drink, as they said the difficulty was of their making, but of course we declined: I trust we may be excused for intimating that we were teetotallers. How-

ever, we parted with the best of feeling, and when we had let the mares blow a bit, we proceeded at a brisk trot over a better bit of road, where the roller had been already working, and to some purpose, to Barsac.

After we had passed Barsac the scenery was improved by a distant view of the mountains on the other side of the Garonne to our left. We had a long hill—which the mares did not take so well as yesterday, but we excused them on account of their exertions at the outset of the day's journey—then a horrible bit of stony road, and then we came to Langon. Here we had to cross the Garonne. We found the bridge, a very narrow suspension-bridge, so narrow indeed that at first sight it didn't look as if our eight feet two of axle would get through; but we had to go over, or fail in our enterprise of getting to the sunny south; so we went at it, Joseph driving, and I going backwards in front of the mares, ready to call out if there was any sign of either of the axle-boxes bringing up against the piers. I wouldn't have had my finger between those boxes and those piers if I had been paid for it; but we got through—that was the great thing—and passed over, with a magnificent view of the Garonne rolling beneath us, to Ste Macaire on the other side.

We halted just beyond Ste Macaire, at a place where three ways met, for lunch. There were very few people about—it is very odd how few people there have as yet ever been about in these French places; there were only two visible to the naked eye in the whole of Langon—here there was at first only one small boy, and he went and fetched the others, consisting of his father, mother, aunt, sister, and baby of unknown sex, to come and look at us. They told us we could put up the mares at a *château* hard

by—which we thought was a very nice relic of the old days when every gentleman and nobleman kept open house for any one who cared to ask for it; but the proprietor of the *château* proved to be a highly respectable party in the market-gardening line, whose chief claim to the title of *château* was that his dwelling had two storeys to it. However, he received us very hospitably, and allowed us to put up our mares in a kind of tool-house at the end of his plot of ground; and when I had been satisfied as to their eating properly to-day, I returned to our own lunch at headquarters. I found the whole family drawn up in a semicircle in front of the Escargot, already on the most friendly terms with Peg, and all wrapped in the profoundest admiration at her cooking. They all talked at once except the baby, and that squalled. After lunch we put James through his three tricks for their benefit, all of which he did at the wrong words of command, but of course that didn't really matter, and presented them with an empty sardine tin, for which they expressed themselves deeply grateful, and which they gave to the baby as a plaything. We left about 1.45: our stable bill came to 30 centimes.

We had not gone very far when we came on a steep hill: we ran three-quarters of the way up it and then stuck on a patch of stones, and no amount of coaxing or other forms of stimulation could induce the mares to go a step farther. Then we returned to the bottom again, took a fresh run, ran up to the same place and stuck again, and no amount, &c. &c., all over again. James, who was still chained up inside, as we were not sure of his following properly yet, whether he thought I was persuading the mares too much or too little, I don't know, but at

this point so far forgot himself as to bite me very severely in the fleshy part of the back of my leg—of which I am still feeling the effects. A nice old lady, with a pretty little grand-daughter, put her head over the hedge and suggested we should send for a *renfort*, of which there was one living at the bottom of the hill. Joseph went for it: it consisted of a very small bony pony, dressed, like David, in a suit of harness about three sizes too large for it, with a gaunt, taciturn man in charge. He said nothing, but attached the rings at the end of his animal's rope-traces to the hook of our pole, whipped the animal up, and our mares, encouraged by having something in front of them, made one great effort, and we arrived at the top, after nineteen minutes' delay over that hill. Then the man said, "Quarante centimes," which I gave him, and he returned with his steed to the place whence he had come. We gave the mares another blow—Mary Ann was puffing rather, and I am still a little anxious about her, but Joseph says it is only a cold—and the old lady came out and told us that we must not be disconsolate at not having got up the hill straight off, it was what was constantly happening; hence the *renfort* at the bottom. We gave the grand-daughter a pinecushion which I once won in a lottery at a bazaar, at which they were highly pleased, and in return told us that we had another and a worse hill before we got to La Réolle, and we must provide ourselves with a *renfort* beforehand, as there was none on the spot.

The mares were a little fidgety when we got under weigh again, as the collars we had made at Bordeaux do not properly fit the hames we brought from England, and the latter kept slipping off and galling the mares' necks.

However, we patched them up for the time being with some spare umbrella-straps we had on board, and so went on by a rather better road, over which we managed to pick up a little of our lost time. The road was much prettier in this part, wooded slopes coming right down to it on the left, and continuing from it down to the railway below us on the right. We crossed a little river—I think the Dordogne—and then came to a village, as it was beginning to grow dark, on a very steep hill, which we hadn't expected from the old lady's description of our coming difficulty, and failing in our attempt to take the hill at a run, brought up about half-way up it, in the very midst of the village infant-school, which was just turning out. However, the little innocents seemed to be quite used to this sort of thing, and not nearly so anxious for their lives and limbs as we were; indeed, in a moment from their first appearance they seemed to be gambolling about amongst the very wheels and hoofs of the mares. We hailed the head infant, who told us of a *renfort* to be had at the bottom—it seemed that the old lady had either forgotten or not looked on this as a hill worth counting; the bad hill was still to come, and this was only the place to get the *renfort*. We had been slowly receding all this time from our own weight; and now, as there was no room to turn safely, we let ourselves go altogether, and backed down to the bottom to the *renfort's* door. This *renfort* was built on exactly the same pattern as the other one: we engaged it and its owner for this and the next hill; and then having backed a little farther for a run, took the hill in grand style amid the cheers of the juvenile crowd.

We continued on with our team of three for some distance, and it grew quite dark and we lighted up, but it was so black

that we could scarcely make out even the figure of the *renfortier* as he sat sideways on his horse, jogging along ahead of us. He had bells, which was fortunate, as we met a lot of carts, drawn by bullocks dressed in the curious white night-shirt sort of garment of the country, coming home from their work, and it would have been rather a bad look-out if we had collided with them; but we passed them all safely with a cheery Good night, as often as not in a woman's voice, from each of them. One advantage of the darkness was that the mares did not see the hill, and our first intimation of it was the *renfortier* hailing us to tell us we were at the top, and there was no need for him to come any farther, as now we had only to go down all the way to La Réolle.

I paid him what I thought just, basing my calculation on what we had given the former man, and on his demurring, gave him all the small change we had left between us; but he went on demurring, so I told him I couldn't give him any more, as I hadn't any more change, at which he retired grumbling, and we thought we had got rid of him. But as we were going gingerly down the hill with the brake hard on, we heard his bells sounding behind us: he had changed his mind, and was coming in pursuit of us. He bore us no ill feeling, however: for, first, when we were just on the point of taking the wrong road into the town, he shot past us and warned us of our mistake, and then when we had recovered the right track and gone a little farther, we suddenly came upon him standing by a blaze of light from an open stable-door, whither he had preceded us to prepare for our coming.

The stable was good, but there was no good place for the Escargot, only on the edge of a very steep embankment, without any parapet, where the slightest shake, even James's toilet in the morning, might have precipitated us in fragments

into the lower town below. Just then an old lady came up and told us that she didn't as a rule let stabling, but seeing that it was us, or words to that effect, she would take in our mares for the night, and we could locate the Escargot on the opposite side of the street, close to a parapet that at that part ran along the top of the embankment. So here we are for the night. We were finally anchored at 6.45, having made 29 kilometres to-day. I sent Joseph for change of a twenty-franc piece, which he obtained with great difficulty, and settled with the *renfortier*, giving him something extra for his kind efforts on our behalf, which quite overcame him, and he apologised for having troubled me, but said that he had to take home the proper amount to his grandfather, whose property the *renfort* was, or he would be beaten. That grandfather must be a veritable patriarch of the old style, for the grandson was a man of quite six feet in his stockings, and broad in proportion.

Peg and I have been for a walk to the post and to try and get something to add to our dinner. There were no letters for us at the post: there does not seem to be any great run on the Poste Restante of La Réolle, for the postmaster showed us the only letter he had in that department, which was an English one with one of the old red stamps on it. There is only one lamp in La Réolle, in the very centre of the town, placed there, I suppose, with a view to perfect impartiality towards all the different quarters on the part of the municipality; and there is one policeman, who stands under the lamp, no doubt for the same object. The shops close early; we only found one open, and there the very little girl in charge seemed more anxious for us to leave, that she might close too, than that we should buy anything. However, we have made a very good dinner off vegetable soup, Irish stew,

and sweet omelette, the last of the provisions we brought with us from Bordeaux. Joseph is sleeping at the old lady's. Mary Ann's cold seems still rather troublesome, but we must hope for the best.

Thursday, Dec. 19.—More or less thick fog all day. We got up at seven this morning, by our own time—La Réolle time is like everything else there, considerably behind the rest of the world—and after breakfast called a council of war, at which we decided to make a half day of it, and not start till after lunch, sending the collars in the morning to be re-arranged so as not to hurt the mares. Joseph went off to find a saddler, and stand over him till the job was done; while Peg and I occupied ourselves with a little marketing and the other domestic business of the Escargot. First I got out the pump to refill the cistern. I was some time before I could find any water: I found the spout of the pump sticking out of the side of a house, but I couldn't find the handle, till a friendly old carpenter who had his shop just opposite to us, and who, not seeming to be overpressed for time, was taking a very keen interest in our affairs, showed me that I had to leave my bucket under the spout, and then go round the corner of the house to where the handle was situated. When I had got the water and was pumping, he came over and asked me if that was an electric light I was working, as he had been lately reading about electric lighting in a scientific paper he took in, and was quite disappointed when he learnt it was only a common foot-pump, not to say, poor man, a little abashed: but he had his opportunity of retrieving his character for acuteness very shortly, for a little crowd soon being attracted by the novel sight, and some members of it also expressing their opinion that this wonderful machine must be an electric light, he turned upon

them with scorn, and told them they were all a set of stupid, for any one could see it was just an ordinary foot-pump; and further, did me the service of making them stand off, for in their eagerness they were crowding rather closely on me, and embarrassing me not a little. He also took charge of our potato-peelings and carrot-tops, which we were rather at a loss where to put, not liking to throw them out on to the road for fear of any collision with the authorities, and gave them to his little daughter to take to her mother, presumably to make soup of,—such is the frugality of the happy French peasant. The crowd, however, was on the whole very orderly, and when they had satisfied themselves that we were only travellers on the road, and nothing more, gradually dispersed to look for something else to stare at. After that we left James to take care of the house—and his howling and barking when left to himself inside was quite enough to frighten any one from making a forcible entry during our absence—and went marketing. We found after a little that, as a rule, after we had got one thing at one stall in the market, it was better to go on to another for the next, as we generally got the first thing at the ordinary market-price, but after we had talked a little, the next thing went up about 50 per cent. Peg said it was my French: it may have been, but it seems odd, as I once got the second French prize out of the whole of the public school where I was educated.

The collars were ready by noon; so after we had had lunch, we said Good-bye to our old lady, and her neighbour the carpenter, and left *La Réolle* for *Marmande* at 1.30, the fog still continuing. We took the lower road round the town to avoid the hill. The collars now seemed to be all right, and the mares were pulling well. Just as we came to the level crossing back into the right track again, the gates were

closed, and we had to wait while the express passed. We made every preparation against accident, but the mares stood perfectly steady, though the train passed close in front of their noses; so, now they have been tested with steam rollers and expresses, we feel pretty confident of their good behaviour in such respects.

We had sixteen kilometres to make to Marmande from that point. The surroundings at first were very like those we passed through yesterday—wooded cliffs down to the road on the left, and the railway to the right: the stones were miserable; every twenty yards or so there was a navvy pecking away at the old stones, or putting down new ones, with all his paraphernalia of long spade, and pick, and mediæval wheel-barrow, and his distinctive number stuck up on a pole behind him marking out the precise limits of his day's work. We have begun to hate those boards with a deadly hate: when we see them in the distance, we always know what we have got to expect. The mares, too, were getting to know what they meant, and went along far less cheerily than yesterday, especially Mary Ann, who was beginning to cause us considerable anxiety, which was not lessened by her developing, at the top of the next hill we went up, not a very steep one, a very distinct something between a wheeze and a snore, and we thought, "Goodness gracious, she is not going to prove *poussive*!"

We went along very slowly after that all the way to Marmande. About half-way on our day's march we crossed the frontier into Lot et Garonne, and both the road and the aspect of the country changed almost immediately—the former for the better, becoming smoother and wider, though we didn't like to run any risk to Mary Ann in

availing ourselves of it: the country, as far as we could see for the fog, relapsed into an uninteresting flat plain. We came to another very small hill. Mary Ann gave out altogether, and we only got up the last part of it literally by force of the Missus pulling alone, and ourselves heaving the wheels over by the spokes, while Peg blocked them with stones as they gradually advanced, in which we were materially aided by a kind pedlar who happened to come by at that moment with his little cart drawn by a couple of large dogs. James, whom we have at last trusted to get down and run (and he so far has quite justified the trust), was extremely struck with these dogs, and held a long confabulation with them, but we have so far not learnt what he gathered from them on the subject of the advantages or otherwise of dog-drawn carts—from the dog's point of view.

Then we got to Bazeille, passing a large burnt-out manufactory just outside it; and the "fire fiend" appeared to have been having a pretty fair time of it there altogether, for when we got into the village we found a *café* that had evidently only just done being burnt, for the ruins were still smoking, and the engine was standing in the road in the middle of a large crowd who were all talking at once, giving their opinions as to the cause of the calamity, and nobody listening to anybody else's: the *pompriers* no doubt had gone home to change their wet boots and stockings, for they were nowhere to be seen. We slipped by, therefore, comparatively unobserved; then we entered on a long, long, straight bit of road, with trees on each side, and stones all down one side of it, to avoid which, and make things easier for the poor Missus, we crept well along the other side, which gave us a tremendous

list to starboard: Joseph and I on the footboard had to throw all our weight on to our left legs, the cramping effect of which I am feeling still; Peg inside had to sit on the lee locker, with her back against the side, which was inclined at an angle of 45° out of the perpendicular, and put her feet against as many of the opposite drawers as she could to prevent them flying out at her; and James, who had come inside at Bazeille for a bit, and had at last succeeded in his long-cherished desire of getting up on to the bed, was standing on his head on the lowermost side, vainly kicking and struggling to get upright again. It was a merey the Escargot is so wide, or I more than half believe we should have upset. The kilometre-stones had ceased when we got into the new department, and we saw nobody to ask how far we had to go to Marmande the whole way, except one very old gentleman, who told us he thought it was about four kilometres; but the poor old fellow must have estimated the distance by his own sensations, for almost immediately after we had passed him, we came on to the town through the fog. Here was the first *octroi* we have seen yet, but nobody came out to trouble us, and we entered Marmande at six, having only come eighteen kilometres in four and a half hours. A nice fat little *café-tier* who had seen us cross the boulevard hailed us and asked if we wanted a place for our performance, and when we thanked him, but said we weren't going to give any performance, he was quite disappointed, and said he supposed it was because of the influenza, but it was a great pity, as he had a beautiful room he could have let us have, and he could have got us quite a number of people to see. However, he did everything for us in the way of finding us stable room, and now we are drawn



TO BE TAKEN AT BEDTIME.

up for the night beside a wall on one side of a narrow lane, opposite the so-called stables of the Hotel de France, which are built as much on the principle of a shed as the others we have yet had to do with, only that they are a little more ventilated; but that is quite by accident, only by reason of the large intervals between the timbers of the walls.

The Missus gave out at the end, and seemed as if she was going to be ill too: we got both mares unharnessed as soon as possible, and when we had rubbed them down and put their coverings on, with plenty of straw under them, I sent Joseph off to find a vet. The vet came, and pronounced Mary Ann to be suffering from a fearfully bad cold on the chest, but not in the least *poussive*, which has been a great relief to us: he says that Brittany horses are often taken like that when they change climate at first. The Missus was only over-tired, but wouldn't be any the worse for a little attention. We were to rub them both with vinegar, and give them a bran-mash and some medicine he would send us; and he is to come again to-morrow. We have been rubbing them with vinegar, it seems to me, almost ever since,—I took Mary Ann, and if she is only one quarter as red-hot as I am, I think she ought to do,—with a small interval for a hasty dinner of some chops which we got at La Réolle this morning, and another interlude occasioned by the arrival of the medicine, which we administered with the help of the husband of the proprietress of the Hotel de France, Peg holding the lantern. Joseph and the husband got under Mary Ann's head and shoved up her chin as high as it would go, while Joseph pulled her lower jaw open with a halter, and I got on the manger and poured the medicine down from a bottle, with the neck wrapped up in a napkin

to prevent her biting it through. A good deal of it went down my arm, and Joseph and the man got a fair share of it on their heads; but still, I think the larger part reached its proper destination. The Missus took hers like a lamb; she will take anything that is given her: since then she has eaten all her bran-mash, and done her best to get at Mary Ann's, so we don't think there is much to be afraid of about her.

We have received some slight abuse from people who wanted to come down the lane, and called out to us to make room for them, but they have all cooled down when, finding we paid no attention to them, they have come on, and had plenty of room to spare to pass us after all. We are just going to retire to rest; it is close on midnight. I hope this bout of Mary Ann's won't last long; but the thing is clear, we shan't get away to-morrow.





CHAPTER VI.

OF OUR SOJOURN AT MARMANDE.

Friday, Dec. 20.—Here we are still at Marmande. Mary Ann is a little better to-day, but hasn't eaten much, so we can't hope to get away even to-morrow. We spent the morning, Peggy cooking and I cleaning: we went out to the butcher's and bought a large piece of beef, for Peggy to make into a *pot au feu*, which, not even allowing for its being her first attempt by herself, has been a tremendous success. I discovered a new kind of pump: one sits on the top on a sort of piston, and the water comes. I began a good many acquaintances at the pump, which we may have to develop if we stop here any length of time, as we are rather beginning to fear, from what the vet says, we may have to do. I was rather surprised at first to find how little excitement we caused; but it seemed that we were generally supposed to be part of the fair which happens to be going on here at present. I gave the Escargot a good sweeping-out, and put down an old bit of carpet—which our predecessors have left for us in the fodder-box—over our new one, as we find that

our constant getting in and out makes the new carpet in an awful mess, and we want to keep it nice for when we get back into more civilised parts and may have to receive company. In the afternoon Peg and I took a walk round the town: the streets are very narrow, with some very picturesque old timber-houses here and there, and there is a Cathedral with a fine partly-ruined cloister; the old lady in charge couldn't tell us the date for certain, but said anyhow it was long before her mother couldn't remember, which seemed as if it must be some considerable time back. We went through the fair, and bought a second lantern: there were a lot of caravans, but we didn't see any as good as ours.

When we returned to tea, we found Joseph had been making inquiries as to the sights of the place, and had been told of a bridge being built over the Garonne 7000 metres long; so we went to see it, taking James for a run along the bank. We found a very fine suspension bridge, with a toll-gate at the end, of which the keeper told us the bridge led to Spain, but that our bridge was farther down the river. We had a very pretty walk, along a rough path by the side of the Garonne, and saw a great number of people fishing, almost as many as one would see in an equal stretch of the Thames on a Sunday, and they seemed to be having about the same amount of luck. When we came to the bridge, after about a mile's walk, we climbed up on to it, and there met a most agreeable clerk of the works, who showed us over it with great pride: but it was only 700 metres long after all: Joseph had made a mistake of a 0, so we can't go home and tell our friends that we have seen a bridge much longer than any other bridge after all, as we had hoped to be able to do. The bridge, when finished, is to

take a railway over it into Spain; so anyhow, when it is opened, we shall probably be the only English people that have ever walked over it. The clerk of the works showed us some of the marks of former floods on the piers, and when we got back to the town we saw more on the walls of the houses: the streets must have been six or seven feet deep in water, and judging from the flatness of the country all round, it must have been all like one vast inland sea.

It began raining just as we got home, and has been raining ever since, so we have not been out since dinner, but have been reading and mapping out our road, and making out a chart on a sort of Mercator's principle, for when we do go on again. We administered another dose to Mary Ann this evening, which was very much a repetition of last night's, and Joseph has also given her some stuff which he mixes in a bucket with hot water, and which looks like pieces of old shirts, but he says it is linseed: Mary Ann seems to like it, and the Missus has been expressing a desire to have some, but she can eat her corn perfectly well, and doesn't require any such humouring.

Saturday, Dec. 21.—Beautiful warm day; only one small shower all day. Still here: Mary Ann is still eating very badly, scarcely at all indeed, so we have decided to remain till Monday. The fair has been in full swing to-day, and there has been a great deal of movement in the town. We were woke up early this morning by sounds of martial music at the end of our lane, and hastily lifted our back blind and looked out to see the military pass by, but it proved to be only an itinerant vendor of coals who had adopted this mode of advertising his wares. Some people turned aside now and then during the morning under the impression that we were an outlying part of the fair, and we felt it our duty to

apologise to them for not being so, as it seemed to us they must think we were there on false pretences, but they none of them showed the smallest resentment, and one good lady, when she had found out that we were English, paid us the slightly questionable compliment of saying that to see English in Marmande was quite a sight in itself, and worth all the ordinary illusions and monstrosities of the fair.

Joseph went out marketing this morning. We are now of opinion that it will be better for the future to make a rule of sending Joseph on our commissions: when he buys anything, he generally manages to persuade the vendor to throw something into the bargain for luck; when we buy anything, it generally seems to be the other way. I pumped the cistern full, and put up an arrangement for fixing the lanterns on the front of the caravan when *en route*, as our system hitherto of holding the lantern in the hand has been very awkward; and I also arranged the old carpet again which I put down yesterday on the top of the other, and which has developed a remarkable and unexplained propensity for wriggling like a snake towards the bed and getting cockled up in heaps for us to entangle our legs in and tumble over. I cut my fingers very badly doing this somehow, which is a thing I have never done before with a carpet: Joseph came to the fore, as he is beginning to do on all occasions now, and strongly advised me to put on a bran-mash; but this seemed to me to be worthy of being reserved as a very last resource, so I only repaired the damage with a piece of everyday court-plaister.

In the afternoon Peg and James and I went for a walk in the town. James insisted on going into all the shops to look round, and generally got something thrown at him, but he went on doing it all the same. We went to the post-office

to get four stamps and five post-cards, and we had to wait five-and-twenty minutes for them, as half the population of Marmande seemed to be in there learning to write, and the other half helping them, and nothing would induce the officials to take us out of our turn even for such a modest request as we had come on. James filled up his time with a fight with four other dogs under the office table, which nearly resulted in our being turned out altogether. Then we went along the Route de Toulouse to survey what sort of road we are going to have in the future. We met a lot of people who begged from us—they didn't look in the least as if they wanted anything, but I suppose they thought there was no harm in trying; and a man drawing his own caravan himself, but he didn't look a very inviting sort of individual, so that our fellow-feeling didn't carry us to the point of fraternising with him. We returned home by the boulevards and railway station, and found that two gendarmes had been down on the Escargot like wolves on the fold; but Joseph was all there in our absence, and they proved to be only friends of the proprietress of the Hotel de France come from motives of private curiosity, and when Joseph, who had just cleaned the Escargot thoroughly outside and in, had shown them round, had gone away highly delighted, not to say envious of our manner of life, after the manner of the policemen in "The Pirates of Penzance."

We gave Mary Ann some vinegar and salt this evening by way of whetting her appetite, which we poked down her throat on a duster wrapped round the end of a stick, and cleaned her teeth with. The hotel proprietress's husband came in to help us again, and got his fingers bitten during the operation; but he was quite pleasant about it, and almost went so far as to say he liked it. We have had more people

shouting at us to get out of the way this evening, and we have also been much gratified by hearing a mamma who was taking an unwilling child home from the fair, threaten to give it to the "great nasty people in the caravan," meaning us. I have been cleaning out the patent filter, which is a work of some elaboration and patience, and involves coating one's self over with a good deal of different kinds of charcoal. James is sleeping in the stable to-night. He is at present singing himself to sleep.

Sunday, Dec. 22.—Dull. We had a great deal of rain in the night. Mary Ann is much better to-day and is picking a bit, but it still looks very doubtful whether we shall even get away to-morrow. Joseph went to church at the cathedral this morning, and made inquiries for us, but reported that there is a Protestant service here only once a-month. The carpet began its old tricks this morning, but we settled the matter by taking it up altogether for the day, as it is as well to make some difference on Sunday.

We have been improving our acquaintance to-day with our neighbours in the lane, who are enjoying a well-merited rest from their weekly labour to-day. James has been the medium between us and most of them: he goes after the cats—only wanting to play with them, as he does with his own private kitten at home, but they don't look at it in that light—and pursues them to the refuge of their own door-steps or dust-heaps; then we go after him, and when we come up with him at the doorstep or dust-heap, as the case may be, apologise and explain to the owner of the cat, and the thing is done. There is a baker, who has spent a good part of his day in doing his more outward and visible ablutions in a round tub in front of his door—he explained to me that it was to get the flour out of his skin: a washerwoman with

a fine voice, who has been using it off and on all day shouting at her son, a fat youth, who would swing on the very rickety gate of her little drying-yard—about five feet square—very much to the risk both of his limbs and the gate; she confided to me that she would much sooner have James to look after than said boy: and an old gentleman just opposite to us next the stables, who can hardly be said to be taking a rest, as his chief occupation on other days is bringing out a plank and standing on it on his doorstep in the sun, and he has been doing very much the same all day to-day. I don't think they quite know what to make of us; indeed I fancy they are very much inclined to think that we are not all that we ought to be, as they can't understand people travelling in caravans with no ostensible object but to get in course of time to a certain far-distant place; but for all that, they are very friendly, and Peg and I have picked up a lot of the colloquialisms of the country that we have never had any opportunity of learning yet, and may prove very useful to us hereafter.

In the afternoon we took James for a walk. The place was swarming with orphan establishments, all out walking two and two in the greatest order and regularity, which James disturbed to a great extent by getting mixed up with the orphans' legs, and creating panics; and we felt it our duty to chastise him summarily, if only to show that we weren't accomplices in his evil doings. He also had three fights with other dogs. We sat for some time on the river-bank, which was very peaceful: all the fishers had gone away for their holiday, and there was nothing to mar the natural beauty of the broad river rolling on between its banks except ourselves and one man in a boat of primitive construction, in which he rowed backwards—that is, forwards

—and some geese. Then we went across the bridge towards Spain. We were going along on the other side when suddenly a two-wheeled cart dashed past us with Jacques Bonhomme, his wife, and all his own and his wife's sisters and cousins and aunts crammed into it, not to speak of their children jammed into the interstices to complete the packing, all drawn by one pony of small stature but great heart. We were almost envying their enjoyment, for they did seem thoroughly happy, when suddenly the near wheel came off, and in an instant they were all in the ditch, a struggling indistinguishable mass of humanity. We ran to help them out and inquire if any of them were hurt, but they all came up smiling at first, and then when they had quite recovered themselves, all fell abusing each other, and the lessor of the cart and pony, and everybody they could think of, and finally James, who, they declared, had frightened the pony, which was rather good, as he had been about fifty yards ahead, over the embankment, and for once in his life, as far as we could see, hadn't been in any mischief. So we left them to get their cart and themselves home by themselves. We got home about 3.30, and since then have been writing letters before and after dinner. The Missus is in roaring health and quite *gai*, Joseph says, which, being interpreted, means that she has been kicking her heels all over the place. She is to be taken out for exercise to-morrow if we don't get away.

Monday, Dec. 23.—Beautiful day. Here we are still. The Missus is gloriously well; Joseph took her out exercising this morning, looking immensely proud at finding himself on the back of a horse again, and she ran away with him a good deal of the way back towards Bordeaux:

but Mary Ann is still ailing, though she is eating slightly better. We are beginning to feel just a little despondent over it, though for the most part resigned, and trying to forget our trouble by devising new occupations. I have bought a new clay pipe and have set to work to colour it. I have also proposed to Peg that I shall take this opportunity of growing a beard—I really began the day before yesterday, but it has not been absolutely necessary to mention it to her till to-day. She has, however, strenuously opposed herself to this proceeding. I think she is much mistaken, as I believe there are a lot of good berths I have failed to get by reason of my youthful appearance. But we have compromised the matter: I am under a kind of vow, like the warriors of old, not to shave till we get to Toulouse, and then if she doesn't like the effect I am to cut the beard off. At present I must acknowledge the effect is rather awful. We got through the daily morning round, and I put the old carpet down, and then sat on the footboard with my feet on the steps reading 'Westward Ho!' and smoking and talking to the old gentleman on the plank opposite. Peg wrote letters. James has attached himself very closely to the old gentleman, and spends most of the morning sharing his plank with him, as he found that was about the sunniest spot there was for him to sit in.

We are beginning to get rather nervous about whether our money will last out, as, not counting on this delay, I only brought away a limited quantity, and our stay here has almost eaten up the small margin I allowed over the estimated expenses to Toulouse, where is the next place I can draw money. We have been through what we have left, and have apportioned it out day by day, allowing for

our stopping here over Christmas-day, as it seems pretty certain we shall have to do now. If we don't leave on the 26th, we shall have to devise something else.

We went for a stroll in the afternoon, intending to sit on one of the benches on the promenade overlooking the river, but we found them all occupied by elderly retired labourers of the town, so we only went a little way up the road along which we came in the other day, and then came back to tea. James only fought two dogs to-day. We have written to Agen and Castelsarassin for any letters that may be waiting for us there. The carpet has gone wrong again this evening. I have nailed it down to the floor at the end nearest the door.

Tuesday, Dec. 24.—Very wet. We sprang a leak in the ventilator over the stove in the night, and I had to get up and stop it with a duster. Mary Ann has been eating a little better to-day, but not enough to justify a start. I was all the morning contriving a movable driving-seat to put on the footboard, as we have found standing all the time when driving is very tiring. My labour has resulted in an arrangement more resembling the ordinary milking-stool of civilisation than anything, which wasn't quite the design I had in my head when I started, but I think it will do. Peg divided her time between hemming some new window-curtains and cooking lunch; and we had a little excitement at luncheon-time, to vary the present monotony of our daily existence, in a doubt which originated with Peg as to whether she had dropped her needle into the hash, which was subsequently increased by her missing her thimble also. I don't think I have masticated my food so well for a long time. However our doubts were eventually proved to be unfounded, by my finding the needle in the cushion on which I was sitting, and

the thimble turned up when I was putting the carpet straight again, which has taken to wriggling towards the door, now it has been restrained from going the other way. James has been very much depressed all day. Joseph recommended him a bran-mash.

We held another council of war this morning, and agreed that it would be better not to run things quite so fine if possible, but try if some of the local bankers wouldn't advance us some money on our letter of introduction and circular note; or if not, send them on as a pledge of good faith to our banker at Toulouse, and ask him to forward us an instalment by post. After lunch, therefore, we went out, and having found a banker,—it didn't seem to matter much which we began with, a snuffy old party who lived in a sort of second-rate pawnbroker's shop, as we know it in pictures of course, up two flights of stairs,—we told him our story, which we had carefully rehearsed beforehand, with the aid of a dictionary and conversation-book, so that there might be no mistake; to which he listened, and then said, without the slightest hesitation, that he couldn't help us, as he couldn't tell if my bankers at home were solvent. Goodness gracious! I wonder what my bankers would say if they had heard him? But possibly we might be able to do something with the *Société Générale*. We went off to the *Société Générale*, and said our story all over again, pointing out to the cashier whom we interviewed that my bankers were in correspondence with other of their branches in other towns; and a little ray of hope dawned on us—we were remanded for inquiries till half-past four. We came home feeling something the same as a criminal must do while waiting for the verdict, and filled up the time in making a beefsteak-pie for dinner. Joseph had gone out fishing. I think he is beginning to understand

our present distress, although we haven't yet confided in him, and is trying to save us some expense by contriving small additions to our table.

We got back to the bank punctually at half-past four, and there our hopes met a crushing blow. A meeting of directors had been hastily summoned, and, after much discussion, had decided that they couldn't change my circular note. Nothing remained now but to write for a *renfort* to Toulouse. We composed a letter to the banker, perfect in grammar and idiom, put the circular note with it into one envelope, and the letter of introduction into another, so as not to put all our eggs into one basket, and then having, after a considerable hunt, and by a great piece of good fortune, found the only Toulouse directory in Marmande, through the kind offices of the *cafetier* who had originally welcomed us on our arrival, addressed the two envelopes, and committed them, registered, to the care of the post. If they are lost now, we shall be more up a tree than ever; but we must hope for the best.

We got letters from Agen this afternoon which were sent there about a fortnight ago. For the news they gave us we might as well have been in the Wild West of America, but they were very welcome all the same. After our return from the post, the old gentleman opposite us invited us to step in and see his sister, who, it seems, is the breadwinner of the pair, sitting indoors all day and working hard at lace-making. She was a pleasant-spoken woman; but their chief object in getting us to come in was that they wanted us to make large purchases of lace. It was certainly very nice-looking lace, as far as I am competent to judge of such things; but there was a sort of latent irony about it all, under our present circumstances, that considerably tickled us.

We have been finding that the American folding-table we bought for the expedition is rather cumbersome; so, to-night at dinner, we tried our predecessor's old plan of three dovetailed planks put across from locker to locker, and secured with thumbserews on each side. The main drawback in this arrangement is that the person who sits on the inner side either has to go to his place before the table is set up before and stop there till it is removed after the meal, or else climb over or creep under it when all the things are on it, both of which manœuvres are rather risky, the first being not unlikely to result in a kind of thunderbolt falling on the table, and the second in a sort of earthquake going off underneath it: still we think it is, on the whole, more convenient for two. We have been much troubled during the last two or three days by flies, of which almost all that there are in Marmande seem to have congregated in our little home: it is a great compliment, no doubt, if it may be taken to imply that the interior of the Escargot is the warmest place in the town, but we could have dispensed with it. Mary Ann has really eaten more to-day, so that our hopes in that respect are beginning to go up again.

To-night being Christmas Eve, Marmande appears to have gone generally on the spree. Joseph reported having been turned out of his bedroom at the Hotel de France, because it was wanted for a party to hold a *réveillon* in—*réveillon*, we take it, is French for making a night of it—from which we gather that our factotum has been hitherto luxuriating in one of the best *salons* of the hotel. Occasional revelers have been passing down our lane. I won't particularise too much; but if, as they say, a Frenchman very seldom gets drunk, it must be acknowledged that when he does—say once a-year—he gets very drunk indeed. I am sorry to say the

son of the washerwoman seems to have taken a little more than is good for him: he is at this moment out in the lane trying to sing, but the result sounds more like an attempt to imitate James, who is uplifting his usual evening melody in the stable. We are just going to hear the midnight Mass.

We have been to hear the midnight Mass at the Cathedral. There was an immense crowd of all classes, and all seemed to have come there with really serious intent; so that it was rather a pity that our feelings were somewhat jarred upon by the mercenary proceedings of the old woman who let out the chairs at two sous apiece, and didn't seem to entertain the smallest feelings of compunction in pursuing people about the building, and interrupting them after they had begun their prayers, to make sure they had paid her properly. I must confess I was secretly rather pleased to see a young man take advantage of one of her longer *sorties* to climb up and hand down over twenty of her chairs to his friends; and I think they all got away scot-free. The music was not anything very grand, but once the chair disputes had been finished, it was all very solemn, and one couldn't help admiring the simple faith that was evident on the faces of all these poor people; for by far the larger majority of them were poor, there being only a very few seats in the front of the centre aisle occupied by the Sous Préfet, the colonel of the regiment quartered here, the Maire, and the other *grands* of the place and their families. We stopped till the very end: there was a fearful crush coming out, as only one small door was opened for the whole of the congregation, but we got through it all right, and have just got home. The night is beautiful: the rain has quite cleared off, and the moon is shining brightly, which is a good thing,

as Marmande is as badly lighted as any of the other places we have passed yet; or perhaps they economise their gas when there is moonlight.

Wednesday, Dec. 25 (Christmas-day).—We were rejoiced this morning, on going through our usual matutinal formula with Joseph of “Bon jour, Joseph;” “Bon jour, monsieur et madame;” “Et comment va la jument? mange-t-elle?” to have his usual reply of “Pas beaucoup, monsieur,” varied into an almost triumphant, “Oui, monsieur, très bien!” Mary Ann is eating, and has been out for a walk with Joseph and the Missus; and now if our money comes from Toulouse and the weather holds, we can get away to-morrow. We took a holiday to-day, except that I took up the old carpet and put it back again into the fodder-box, as it doesn’t seem that we are going to manage it anyhow. The other people in the lane took a holiday too: for the most part they, as did also the rest of Marmande, as we found when we went out for a little prowling round, spent the morning in bed recruiting themselves, after their exertions last night, for further efforts in the afternoon and evening. Our old friend of the plank appeared on his wonted post in his complete Christmas get-up, which bore all the signs of having been neatly folded up ever since the last anniversary, and simply reeked of lavender—a straw hat, yellow trousers, and a blue frock-coat with brass buttons of extreme antiquity; in fact, about as antique as anything we have seen yet in Marmande.

Joseph came to us this morning, and with something of an air of mystery begged us not to prepare any lunch; but when we asked him his reason for such a remarkable—not to say, to the superficial observer, unreasonable—petition, for, besides the needs of our appetites in these

times of sameness, we have come to look forward to our meals in much the same manner as people do on board ship, as an aid to getting through the time, he could contain his secret no longer, and confessed to us that he was preparing a surprise for us in the shape of some *gibier* which he had purchased from an itinerant vendor for three sous, and was having cooked for us at the hotel. We were much touched by this little proof of his devotion to us, and spent the rest of the time speculating as to what sort of thing the *gibier* at three sous was going to turn out. We had to wait rather beyond our usual hour for lunch for it, but at last Joseph exultingly brought it along: it was a small brown bird, about the size of a small grouse, but the manner of serving it up was the gem of the whole thing: it had on its head and all its plumage, and was seated in a very life-like attitude on the top of a large cut of fried bread, with a little chaplet of flowers round its head, and two geraniums intertwined in its tail feathers, while in its mouth it carried a large piece of lemon. We were doubting how to carve it, but Joseph soon solved the difficulty by pulling out four skewers concealed amongst the plumage, which served to fix on the head, the two wings, and the tail respectively, and the bird lay as if it was going to have its bath, and quite ready to eat. It was very plump and very good: Joseph called it a *grive*, which according to our dictionary means a thrush; but I don't think it can have been that, for it tasted more like what it looked—a kind of grouse. Joseph was very keen for us to keep the plumage and head, which he thinks may be worked up at some future occasion into something ornamental in the fire-screen way; so not to hurt his feelings, we have stuck them up for the time being over the door just inside.

In the afternoon we took another walk over the suspension bridge, and then struck off the roads into the fields; but we found ourselves getting into a morass, so turned back, and went through the town. James was particularly iniquitous to-day: he would chase all the children we met to take their Christmas cakes from them; and when we had at last broken him of that, he went into all the groceries one after the other, and walked leisurely round looking at everything, as if we had all the money we wanted and had told him to choose himself a Christmas box; and when the grocer chased him out, and I went after him to chastise him, he got between an old lady and the wall, and began to roll himself up in her carefully preserved silk dress, till he nearly upset her, and she began to call for help, and we were afraid we should have the police down on us. Of course we apologised in our very best French; and James came home fastened by his collar to my handkerchief, and after being well punished, was given two hours' imprisonment in the stables till dinner, when we let him out because it was Christmas-day.

Peg has developed a toothache this evening; Joseph has, it is getting almost needless to state now, recommended a bran-mash. I did most of the cooking, therefore, this evening. The piece of resistance of our Christmas dinner was a sweetbread: by the way, we had a little adventure getting that this afternoon, as when we got to the butcher's we could neither of us recollect the French for sweetbread, and when I made a shot at *pain sucré*, he politely referred us to the baker. However, fortunately, just then we perceived one hanging up in a corner, so we got what we wanted by pointing at it. Then we had beefsteak and onions, though the beefsteak was really only a rib. I cried so over peeling

those onions that Peg began to be quite frightened that I must have been suddenly overcome by some long-pent-up emotion. And we had fiery plum-pudding, and a bottle of two-franc wine, which of course was reckless extravagance, but one is excused those sort of things at Christmas; and we toasted all our absent friends, and barring Peg's toothache, had quite a festive evening, and kept it up till late. James has been allowed to sit up to-night, but I am just going to take him across to the stable to bed.

11.30 P.M.—The washerwoman's son is making a tiresome knocking and wailing noise outside his mother's door, calling to her to open and let him in. Either the whole family has gone out, or else to bed leaving him to repent his youthful errors in the cold outside.

Thursday, Dec. 26.—No answer has yet come from the banker—it could hardly be expected with yesterday Christmas-day—so we are still here. It rained hard last night, and the old leak broke out again, and I had to get up and repeat the performance with the duster. Mary Ann is still going on well towards thorough convalescence: Joseph was going to take her and the Missus out again this morning, to try how they went with the bells; but it came on to rain, so he came back again before he had got very far. Consequently both the mares have been exhibiting signs of "gaiety" in their stable, rather to the alarm of a little *commis copageur* who has put his whole turn-out, pony and cart and all, into the stable, and who is particularly nervous about the cart, which is rather perilously near the Missus's heels.

Poor Peg has been the invalid to-day, having been in bed suffering off and on all day with toothache, so that except once to the chemist in the morning to get some stuff for her.

and once to the post-office and to get some cakes for tea in the afternoon, I have hardly been out at all. I did all the cooking to-day,—*œufs à la plat* for lunch, and fried cutlets with potatoes and carrots, and rice pudding, for dinner; and though I say it that perhaps shouldn't, I think I have all the materials of a first-class *chef* in me. I spent most of the rest of the day making out my chart of the road, which I have finished, and in the evening altering the curtain of our bed-chamber into a sliding one by means of a thick piece of wire twisted threefold to make a rod. The top of the caravan just under the roof is fearfully hot, and I feel as if I had been working in a coal-mine: I don't think there is quite rapid enough exit for the hot air, though we don't feel it in the least in the lower regions, about the normal level of our heads, and it does get away in time through the ventilators. I must try and think out some way of remedying this.

Friday, Dec. 27.—Dull and drizzling rain. Peg is all right again; so is Mary Ann. Our *renfort* arrived this morning; and we would have started again to-day, only that the weather has been such that we were afraid that if we did, Mary Ann might get another chill, and we should have all the same bother over again; so we thought it best not to run any risk, and give her another day this side of recovery, and so have put off our departure till to-morrow morning.

The *renfort* from Toulouse came by the first post, in the shape of an order on a private bank at Marmande which is in correspondence with the one at Toulouse; and I went out at once in search of this private bank. It was a very private bank indeed, and it was a long time before I could find any one who knew the way to it. There was a sort of idea that it was somewhere along the Toulouse road, and I walked some mile or so along that till I had passed quite the last

house that had any connection with Marmande, and so I turned back again. Then I met an old woman from whom I inquired just on the chance, and after thinking a bit, she recalled my private banker to her memory as a young man who had not long since lost his father, and then having got on the right track, after a little more consideration she showed me where he lived. The bank was situated in an ordinary-looking villa sort of residence, standing back about a hundred yards from the road: the office itself was round at the back of the villa in the place where one would have expected the scullery to be: indeed it looked, when one had got inside, very suspiciously like a converted scullery. The young man, who turned out to be about sixty years old—I suppose the old lady's estimate of his age was a relative one, based on her own—was expecting me. We had just the very smallest difference of opinion as to the proper way for me to spell my name, but he was very polite—I can't help thinking that he was rather glad to get a customer of any sort—and gave me my money, for which I thanked him profusely and came away rejoicing.

It was drizzling then slightly, so we determined to wait till after lunch to see if it would stop; meanwhile we paid our hotel stable bill, and the vet's, on which Joseph got a considerable reduction for us, by allowing the vet to believe that the mares were his own, which hasn't jarred on our consciences very much, as, if the vet could afford to give his services to Joseph for one price, we fail to see why he should charge us a higher one for exactly the same thing; and we made everything fast, and tried to give the Escargot a preliminary move from the place where she has been standing all this time; but she is deeply enfoncéed in the mud, so we had to give up the attempt till we put the mares in. Just

before lunch the barometer went up just about half the width of the point of a needle, and our hopes rose accordingly; but during lunch it went down again, and it was still drizzling; so as the afternoon went on, our hopes went gradually down again too, and at last it got too late even to think about starting till to-morrow. We didn't go out much all day, but sat waiting, and looking at the barometer, though we had pretty well made up our minds that we couldn't start. Joseph occupied the time in writing a letter to his people at home, which he brought and showed us with great pride. It was very phonetic in its spelling—quite sufficiently so to delight even the heart of Mr Isaac Pitman—and required reading out loud before its contents could be quite satisfactorily grasped. I don't think it will be betraying confidence to say that it was exceedingly gratifying to find amongst other items, more or less family matters, that Joseph was very content with us as his master and mistress.

Joseph went out shopping for us in the latter part of the afternoon, and took my mackintosh: this is the first time it has been in use since we started, and I regret to say that, from being kept in a continuous state of being folded up, it has developed some very serious holes: Joseph nearly lost himself in the labyrinth, and, in his struggles to extricate himself from them, only extended and added to them. After tea I took my turn in it, and had literally to wind it round and round me to make any efficient use of it: the right arm has become quite a distinct garment from the rest. I went to the post-office to take some letters which Peg had managed to finish off in the intervals of looking at the barometer; and then to a stationer's, to buy some envelopes. When I was going to pay for them, I found to my horror that I must have left my purse at the post-office: there was not much in it,

but with our late experience we can't afford to chuck even not much away. When I got back to the post-office, an honest man met me at the door with my purse, and gave it back to me. I of course expressed how truly grateful I was, and he congratulated me on the fact of my missing property having fallen into the hands of the only honest man in Marmande: he may have been, but I think it would have sounded better if he had got a friend to say so for him.

This evening, having made all our preparations for a start to-morrow, we have become kind of disorganised, and have simply idled the whole evening away: we have scarcely even looked at the barometer, as we are going to start in the morning, weather or no. I have caught a good many specimens of the *Musca Marmandensis*, and removed them gently but firmly from the interior of the caravan, as we don't want to take away any with us on the journey. I have also smoked a good deal. The clay pipe is beginning to colour quite respectably.

We finished the last of our six boxes of 250 wax-matches which we brought from England, this morning, and have been forced to fall back on the French variety. They are of two kinds: one won't strike, and the constant failure to make them do so tends to demoralise one; and the other will strike, and instantly impregnates the whole atmosphere for yards round with sulphur, whereby one is in danger of suffocation. A decent wax-match or safety-match is not to be had for love or money: these are the evils of monopoly. We have tried deputing the match-striking department to Joseph, thinking that maybe as he has been brought up to them, he would be able to manage them better: but the only result has been that I have picked up a great many things to say which certainly sound better in French.

The Marmande Musical Society has been practising all the evening at the Hotel de France, accompanied by James in his stable. We have given Joseph the alarm again, and are retiring early—10.30 P.M. I have just looked out; the sky is breaking a little, so there are some hopes for to-morrow.





CHAPTER VII.

ON AGAIN — TONNEINS — AIGUILLON — PORTE STE MARIE —
AGEN — LA MAGISTÈRE — MALAUZE — CASTELSARASSIN —
AGAINST TIME.

Saturday, Dec. 28.—There was a sharp frost last night. When we got up this morning at six, there was a thick fog on; so we waited a little to give it a chance of clearing off. We saw Joseph, while we were waiting, busying himself by carefully separating the larger from the smaller pieces from the heap of sweepings that we had put out to be taken away by the dust-cart; and when we inquired what he was doing, he told us that we had done wrong in putting them all together, as the large pieces were the perquisite of *M. le Chiffonnier*, while the smaller ones had to be removed by *le Bourrier*—simple, without the M.: such are the nice distinctions in rank, even down to what we choose to consider the lowest classes.

The fog hadn't cleared off at nine; but adhering to our res-

olution of yesterday, and profiting by our experience not to waste any more time in vain expectations, we at last set out from the spot which had known us so long, exactly at 9.10. We had no room to turn in the lane, so we had to go right up to the other end, where it got wider, to do so, then came back down it, waving our adieux as we passed to our friends of the last few days, and so out into the street, where the *cafetier* and the proprietress of the Hotel de France and her husband were standing at the corner to see us pass, and along to the market-place. Here the market was going on, and there was an immense crowd of people, but we got through without any accident, though we had some very near shaves of slaughtering various old women who were sitting very close to the edge of the road, exposing their wares under the customary red umbrellas of their profession, and of upsetting two or three itinerant *pâtissier's* trucks. We passed another caravan also making its way out of the town, and soon left it far behind: the fog still continued, though occasionally there was a faint gleam of sun; but the roads were hard after the frost, and for the most part slightly descending again, and without many stones so far, and the mares were stepping out well, and quite of their own accord.

At Faugerolles, ten kilometres, which we did in a very little over the hour, we pulled up for a moment to put the *couvertures* straight, which we had kept on the mares for greater precaution, and which were slipped all to one side: somewhat to our alarm, Mary Ann was beginning to wheeze again slightly. Joseph says he thinks it is only a little of the cold remaining on her chest, and she will get all right when we get into warmer weather; and the vet was quite positive that she was not *poussire*; but I have looked up Youatt, and I find there is such a thing as hereditary roar-

ing: it doesn't seem from what he says that there is anything serious about a horse being so; but it isn't pretty, and we are hoping sincerely that she is not going to prove a hereditary roarer. It is just the sort of thing that one can't get any one to believe when one has got a horse that one wants to sell him.

There was a sign-post just beyond Faugerolles which told us we had come eighty-nine kilometres from Bordeaux, and had forty-eight to go to Agen. We had restrained the spontaneous impetuosity of the mares now and were going at half speed, varied every now and then by a walk, as of course we were not at all happy about Mary Ann. The fog lifted a little, and we began to see more of the country round, which was very flat. Presently we came up with a postman, and I got down and walked with him some way. He was the local postman for Faugerolles, and had to walk to Tonneins one day with the out letters, and come back the next with the in letters. Faugerolles appears to be a happy place: I shall go and live there some day when I want a spell of almost perfect rest. We offered him a lift, but he declined with many thanks, as he said he shouldn't gain anything by getting to his destination before the appointed hour, and indeed an inquiry might be started as to how he had managed to do it, and he might get into trouble, so we wished him good-bye, and left him. We then broke into a half trot for another three kilometres, in the course of which we raced a *petite vitesse* train that was going in the same direction as ourselves along the line to the left, and beat it. Now we understand why it takes such a time for things to come by *petite vitesse*: we once rashly consigned some of our heavier luggage to that mode of conveyance, to come to England from the sunny south, thinking that it would arrive three or four days

after us, as by an ordinary English luggage-train; but we had to wait six weeks for it, greatly to our, and especially Peg's, inconvenience.

The road all the way to Tonneins was very flat, and the stones were only bad for the last two or three kilometres, and then our wheels went for the most part wide of them. We drove up a pretty avenue of chestnuts into the town, and pulled up on an open space in front of the Hotel de Nord for lunch. The sun made his final burst through the fog at that moment, and didn't go in again till he set. It was a little after noon, and we had come eighteen kilometres, which was an average of six an hour,—not bad with a doubtful mare.

We stopped at Tonneins for nearly two hours. Tonneins is a great manufacturing place of the tobacco monopoly, and all the workpeople were coming out of the factory just as we arrived, something like in "Carmen," only they wore every-day clothes; but nobody took very much notice of us, except one small boy, aged apparently about seven, who attended us professionally as representative of his father, who was ostler to the hotel, but was temporarily absent on a message; and an old lady, who seeing me filling up the paraffin-feeder from the large can in the fodder-box, ran home and got a bottle, and came and wanted to know if we were *marchands d'essence*. The mares ate well: we gave Mary Ann warm water to drink to loosen the phlegm on her chest.

We left Tonneins by going round outside it. Tonneins is a great Protestant centre, and has a very handsome Temple, which we passed on our way out. Then we came to a wide open space, like a suburban drying-ground, with a notice-board set up detailing all the pains and penalties which

awaited any one who should stand a cart or other vehicle there, and five carts or other vehicles tastefully grouped in a half circle, with the notice-board as a centre. There the road branched off into two, and we were in doubt for a moment as to which we should take, as there was nobody about to show us, and presently we decided to take the one to the right, for it had the most stones, and for that it must be the *Route Nationale*; and we had not gone far before the sign-posts and the kilometre-stones showed us that we had chosen well. We went down a steep hill, and the prospect was now prettier: the Garonne lay below us to the right, and not very far away to the left were hills, with a picturesque old castle on one of them. Then we gradually edged away from the Garonne along the undulating ground of the Lot valley, still keeping up our average of about six kilometres an hour, which the mares did quite of their own free will and without any pressing, through Ayet and Nicole, both pretty little villages on the Lot, the road being variable, with stones, as before, generally pretty thick in the neighbourhood of the villages; and at a few minutes after four we came to a very steep bridge, up which we climbed, and running down on the other side, came to Aiguillon: twenty-nine kilometres to-day.

Aiguillon is built on a very steep hill, the old castle being at the top, and the main street descending to the river-bank, something like Windsor. The lower part of the town here must have suffered severely during the great floods, for we saw the flood-marks on the walls of some of the houses half-way up the first-floor windows. We stopped at the bottom to try for stables, but a blacksmith whom we hailed told us there was nothing in that part of the town which would suit us; so we went at the hill, and went up it at one run, first to

the left, then sharp to the right, and then sharp again to the left, like an inverted S, the mares taking it without a flinch, under the bastion of the old castle, and through the public square out on to the beginning of the road beyond the town, where we found the *auberge* which the blacksmith had told us of.

The *aubergiste*, a broad-shouldered, good-natured-looking *paysan*, came out with his two stalwart sons, all clad in the long blouses and *berris* of the district, and welcomed us, helping us to take the mares out and lead them away to the stable, which is really a cave dug out in the side of the hill below their garden, and approached through their kitchen and second-best bedroom. However, the mares seem very comfortable there, and it seems perfectly dry. We are drawn up by the side of the road opposite the *auberge*; the *aubergiste* says we shan't be interfered with by the police, and we see no reason to doubt him, for we are only one of a long line of vehicles, this seeming to be the public livery-yard of Aiguillon.

When we had settled ourselves, Peg and I and James went out shopping, and bought a leg of mutton for our Sunday dinner: it cost four francs, which, even allowing for the usual premium on our nationality, is the dearest we have had to pay yet. Aiguillon is rather a curious old town, rather important, I believe, in the middle ages, and there is a sort of medieval air hanging about it still in its narrow streets, quaint old town-hall on arches, and queer old town pump, with a pendulum handle with a weight at the end which one has to swing backwards and forwards across the face of the pump to get the water. I remember having in my youth read something about some of the Black Prince's knights being shut up here, and the Duke of Orleans or somebody—

I won't be sure exactly—coming with a huge army to besiege them, and swearing a terrible oath that he would not leave till he had taken the town: but he didn't take it; and so by rights he ought to be here still. I wonder how he managed about that oath.

The inhabitants, however, have considerably spoilt the antiquated effect by calling their streets and squares after events or people connected in some way or other with one or other of their numerous revolutions: thus the Grande Place is called Quatorzième Juillet, and there are Victor Hugo, and Rousseau, and Danton Streets, and Rollin Street, though I must confess I didn't know that that quondam tormentor of boyhood, Rollin, had any business in such company.

It turned very cold this evening, and it feels and the sky looks very like snow. We had a little misfortune with our dinner this evening: we had a veal pie which Peg prepared and partly baked while we were stopping for lunch, and then, to keep it from dust in the oven while we were coming along, wrapped it up in a sheet of the 'Petit Journal.' When she came to finish it for dinner this evening she found that by some curious chemical process the whole of the news of the 'Petit Journal' had transferred itself to the roof of the pie, and as the flavouring appeared to us to be slightly too *piquant*, we had to sacrifice our pie-crust, and confine our meal to the interior contents of the dish. We threw the crust out into the road: it is almost needless to say that James escaped as soon afterwards as possible, and ate it up, 'Petit Journal,' news and all.

Joseph is not pleased with this place. We think that he has been spoiled for some little time to come by his comfortable residence at Marmande. Anyhow he considered it his

duty to stop with the mares till they had got all their corn inside them, as he suspected nefarious designs on the part of our host and his sons. He has got himself a bed at the best hotel in the town, as he declares there is no room for him in the *auberge*, and has retired to rest.

Sunday, Dec. 29.—As we had more than half expected, there was heavy snow in the night, with half a gale of wind, which, getting in under the false canvas roof, made a noise that sounded exactly as if somebody had climbed up on to it and was walking about there—so much so that Peg, regardless of all my representations that, first, it was not likely that anybody would take the trouble of climbing on to our roof, as he could have no possible object in doing so, as, if he wanted to get in, the obvious way for him to try would be by the door; and secondly, that even supposing any one had climbed up from sheer cussedness, it would be much more unpleasant for him than for us, and the chances were that he would very soon come down of his own free will: still, in spite of all I could say to reassure her, she insisted on my getting up to see what was the matter.

The ground this morning was one sheet of white, and snow was still falling; and so, as there seemed a possibility of our being eventually snowed up, and Aiguillon didn't strike us as being a particularly pleasant place to select for such an experience, we hardened our hearts, and made up our minds to break through the rule we had laid down for ourselves not to travel on Sunday. Joseph was quite willing, as he was still strongly prejudiced against the *aubergiste* and his family, so we hurried through our morning preparations as speedily as possible, and got away a little after eight. Our stable bill certainly was higher this morning than it has been yet, by eighty centimes; but maybe everything is dearer in

Aiguillon, like the leg of mutton last night: as far as outward civility went, we really found nothing to complain of in our host.

I had to refill the cistern this morning before we started, and found that the tap which supplied our part of the town was constructed on a new and somewhat mistaken principle—viz., that water would run up hill. There was a lower tap some little distance back along the road, and then the pipe followed the upward incline till it got to our tap, the latter being some ten or twelve feet higher than the first, so that of course if any one was filling a bucket at the lower tap, no one could get a drop of water at the upper one till the other man had turned off his tap and the water had had time to mount up to the higher level by its own pressure: and as often as not, before it had done that, somebody else came to the lower tap. I pointed this out to another man who had come to the higher tap at the same time as I had, but he wouldn't believe it, and said that his uncle, who had been Maire when the water-supply was laid on, said that the intermittence of the supply must be owing to the contraction and expansion of the pipe between the two taps: so then I asked him if he wouldn't go to the other tap, and prevent any one from using that for five consecutive minutes, and I would undertake that there would be a continuous supply at my tap for the whole of the time—the lower tap, being nearer the town, was of course the most popular: so he did so, and I filled my two buckets without interruption. He wasn't convinced, however, but preferred to believe his uncle against me.

James had a fearful battle before we left, with three dogs who came round asking impertinent questions, and when he didn't condescend to talk to them, got him into a corner and set upon him: he got rolled over in the mud and snow, and

came back to us in a frightful state of dirt and foam; but he maintained the honour of his country nobly, and beat them off in spite of their superior size and numbers, for which we gave him great praise: and he has been going about with his nose in the air and his tail up all day, and wanting to fight every dog he meets.

The weather was looking a little better when we started. There was a steep hill down a little way out of the town, and then the road became flat again, with snow-clad hills in the distance. The sun came out, and shone on the white country, and I think it was the prettiest sight we have seen yet. We crossed the railway, and turned to the left along for some way till the rising ground closed in on us again: then we went along the side of the hill, with the slopes covered with snow coming down to the road on the left, and the Lot on the right, which was canalised here, with straight rows of poplars on each side of the two tow-paths. We went at the rate of nearly twelve kilometres the hour along this part,—Mary Ann's roaring has quite ceased, for which we are very thankful: I suppose Joseph was right, and the hot water and solution of linseed that we gave her last night has done for her what was required,—and we reached Porte Ste Marie at 11.30.

Porte Ste Marie is a pretty little town on the side of the hill, looking particularly clean and white to-day by reason of the snow-covering it had all over it. We stopped there for lunch, as we found St Hilaire would be too uneven a break in the day's journey, putting up at the Hotel de l'Europe—a rather superior-looking little hotel with a picturesque porch and verandah, very like an old-fashioned English country inn—on the avenue leading into the town. The people there were very nice, and gave us hot water and everything we

wanted. The snow stopped altogether while we were waiting there: it had not been coming down more than ten or twelve flakes at a time all the morning, but we could dispense very well with even that small amount. We left Porte Ste Marie about 1.30: we had to pass through the main street of the town, which was very tortuously built—most of the houses being of timber, and apparently put up one by one, and just as the original owners had thought proper, without any particular reference to any regularity of frontage in the whole; and very narrow, so that there was only just room for us, and we narrowly escaped carrying away some of the old signs that were hanging over the shop doors. The inhabitants all fled into their houses, and peeped out from their doors and windows to see the accident come off; but we got away safely at last, and went along at a good pace again, the road continuing, as before, along the side or at the foot of the hills to our left; and away in the distance on the right we could see the hills on the other side of the valley of the Garonne, all as pure white as the rest of the landscape. Stones as before.

We passed Frontac, on the Garonne, a typical little village, with its church, and its well, and its Café de Commerce, precisely on the pattern of all the other villages; and then the road, which had been pretty undulating all day, became more so, and we had to reduce our pace. Stopping for a blow at the top of one very steep though short ascent, in front of a solitary little roadside *café*, we came upon a large party assembled of young peasants with their sweethearts, who immediately surrounded us with shouts and interchanges of rustic chaff, thinking that a good opportunity had come in their way for the bestowal and reception of fairings. We met with some trifling reproach for having thus raised their

expectations in vain, but we apologised, and I think they forgave us; but from what we could see by looking back, the young men didn't get off so well at the hands of their sweet-hearts—so illogical, not to say tyrannical, is the female mind under certain conditions.

Then the road became flat again—keeping along the canal, which ran along here at a considerably higher level than we were—and terribly stony, so that we dropped to a walk altogether. Peg sat in the door of the Escargot on one of the folding-chairs and drove, while Joseph and I walked alongside the mares' heads talking to them. James ran on in front for a hundred yards or so, then came back, and then ran on again, thereby increasing the length of his day's journey by quite two-thirds more than it need have been, and all the while bristling with expectation and in preparation for a fight; but as no other dogs appeared, he wasted his energies in this respect also.

We passed St Hilaire, a long, straggly place, the larger portion of it lying on the other side of the canal, which here, by means of locks, had climbed down to a lower level; and Cognac, where we came on all the good people coming out of church, including the music, which consisted of a bassoon. The dear old *curé* was surrounded by his flock, to whom he was no doubt giving good advice, and perhaps, good old man, something more substantial out of his slender pittance. It was a subject worthy of a picture. And then still on, passing the only other vehicle we had seen actually on the road to-day—a straw-cart driven by an old man, who looked like a brigand retired on half-pay, with the most evil countenance I have seen for some time, and drawn by an ancient mare, and a foal, the Isaac of her old age, harnessed tandem fashion; and so we came in sight of

Agen, 142 kilometres from Bordeaux: to-day's journey a little over twenty-nine.

There was a steep bridge to mount over the railway—quite a rarity in France; and even here I don't think they would have departed from their usual system, more economical even if more dangerous, of a level crossing, if it had not been that the bridge crossed over the canal too. Then we had to climb up on to the promenades, which run round the town, answering to the boulevard of the ordinary French town, and much, if not exactly, the same thing; but I believe from what we gathered while asking the way to the stables from some of the inhabitants, that the Agennais are rather touchy about people calling their promenades by any other name. Joseph had been told of a stable by his friends at Marmande, and we were not long in finding it, just opposite the blacksmith's, about 5.30. It is the best stable we have had yet; the floor is bricked and properly drained, and there are hanging partitions between the horses that separate them from each other much more effectually than the usual temporary pole. We are drawn up by the side of the promenades in front of the arch into the stable.

We went for a walk round the town before dinner, which is a comparatively fine place, as it should be, being the capital of a department. There is a theatre and two market-places, one old, with colonnades running round it, evidently the old centre of the town, the streets immediately leading out of it being very narrow, with the houses visibly inclining towards each other at the top, and very primitive and dirty, in fact remarkably like Seven Dials before the recent improvements. There is a fine public place with a garden, with a statue of Joan of Arc in the middle, which they are very proud of.

though I don't know exactly what connection she had with Agen.

The old brigand with the curious pair has come up with us again, and put up at the same stables. He made a most barefaced attempt to annex our second stable lantern which we bought at Marmande fair this evening, declaring he had taken his into the stable, and as ours was the only one there, that must be it. He waxed positively violent over it, and when I eventually perceived his lantern hanging down from the shaft on the farther side of his cart, as it stood outside us on the promenades, and showed it to him, he didn't amend his language very much even then.

Monday, Dec. 30.—To-day was very cold and foggy. We only made half a day of it to-day, as we first had to wait to have the mares shod, which they were beginning to want, after all the hard roads and stones they have come along, and then when they were ready, Mr James was nowhere to be found: when last seen he was talking to some not over-respectable dogs whose acquaintance he had made on the promenades, and it was supposed that he must have accepted their invitation, without asking our permission, to walk round and see something of the town. There was a skin-dresser's shop next door to the *burctte* attached to our stables, and Joseph threw out dark hints as to the possibility of James having been beguiled in there and made away with for the sake of his coat; but we thought that could hardly have happened without his letting us know, so dismissed the horrible idea from our minds, and organised ourselves into three parties to thoroughly scour the town in search of him. Peg walked for some distance back along the way we had come in yesterday; Joseph took the one half of the town itself, and I the other. I don't think I left a street unsearched

on my part—I certainly saw more of Agen than I should otherwise have done; and then I went over all Joseph's part too, shouting and whistling at intervals as I went along, till I rather wonder that I was not questioned by the police.

We all reassembled about an hour and a half later, but nobody had anything to report, and we were very nearly beginning to think that Joseph must be right after all, or if not exactly so, as far as that James had been stolen by some one, and we should never see our poor scamp again; and I was just starting off on a last search, before putting the matter in the hands of the police—for we had resolved that we would stop at Agen, at any rate till we were certain that there was no hope—when suddenly looking back along the promenades, to where a sort of short canal ran up, forming a *cul de sac* at right angles to them, I saw Mr James appear for a moment on the bank of this canal round the corner of a house, gambolling in all unconsciousness of the anxiety he had been causing us, with a big wolf-hound with whom he appeared to be on the highest terms of friendship. I ran after them, calling and whistling with all my might: James's conscience no doubt struck him at that moment, and he and his friend instantly disappeared round the corner. Peg and Joseph had not seen what I had, and came after me at a slower pace: Peg told me afterwards she thought for the moment that the grief had turned my brain—which doesn't say very much for her opinion of my brain. I ran still faster, and when I turned the corner, there was James running away as hard as he could, trying to explain to his friend, who was running alongside of him, his reasons for doing so: I ran even still faster—I didn't think I could ever sprint like that, and I really doubt if I shall ever be able to

do so again—and gradually gained on them; till the big wolf-hound, seeing, I suppose, that there was a very good prospect of James getting into trouble, and not wishing to be involved in it himself, broke off to the left across a plot of waste land, and left James to his fate. James evidently now saw how hollow these hastily-struck-up friendships often are, and that it was better to come back to his old and better tried alliance, cost what it temporarily might; so he sat himself



deliberately down in the centre of the path and waited till I had come up to him, when he cowered on the ground, looking up at me piteously and entreating me not to be too hard on him. I took him by the collar and led him back to where Peg and Joseph were coming along behind to meet us, and then we all returned to the Escargot. The rejoicing there over the returned prodigal was great, but it was slightly tempered with a little judicious chastisement.

We had a bit of a dispute with the stable proprietor this morning, over one of the hanging partitions, which the Missus, in a fit of gaiety and trying to reach over at Mary Ann with her hind leg, had brought down, pulling the staple into which the suspending bar was hooked out of the ceiling. It was really only a matter of five minutes' work, with a ladder and a gimlet, to make a new hole in the rafter for the staple, but the man wanted to charge us three francs for it. I offered to do it

myself for nothing, but he wouldn't accept my offer : so not wishing the bother of a *procès verbal*, which it might have led to, with other impediments to our going on to follow, we compromised the matter with 1 franc 50 centimes, which overcharge we partly took out by giving him to understand that he was an old fraud. We got away in the end, after lunch, at 1.30.

We left Agen through the promenades, then round behind the statue of Joan of Arc, and so out. There was no view, as it has been so foggy all day. We are longing for the time to come when we shall turn our faces south. The road was worse than ever, and all uphill for the first part of the journey, then flat, but still with a slight inclination to ascend. We have been going along most of the day with the hills to our left, then the road, then the canal, then the railway, then the Garonne, all running alongside in parallel lines, the Garonne in this part being about as wide as the Thames at London Bridge : the other bank, as far as we could see for the fog, was very flat. At St Jean de Thurac we made our only stoppage for the day, and that was only for twenty minutes while a cart which had got well broadside across the road preliminary to shedding a wheel was got out of the way. Shortly after that we crossed the railway and the canal, and the frontier into Tarn et Garonne.

The hills then edged away to the left and the Garonne to the right, and the last bit of country into La Magistère was plain. We reached La Magistère—only ten kilometres today—at four, the shortest journey and about the worst time we have made yet ; but then the weather, and the roads, and the incline, have all been against us. We are fixed up for the night in front of the Hotel du Cheval Noir, at least that is what we suppose to be the name of the hostelry in ques-

tion; the sign itself runs thus: Hotel du—then a picture of a milk-white steed, and then underneath that—Noir. The proprietress wanted to make us undertake to pay extra stabling on account of the size of our mares, but we firmly resisted her demands, and threatened to go on even to Castelsarassin to-night if she persisted in her extortionate demands, so she has given in on that point. Perhaps she was partly justified in trying to get us to pay something more than the usual price at the first onset, as there has been a great run on her stables, there being a lot of people on the move just now, going to spend New-Year's day in their family circles; and two or three have rather demurred to our mares sharing the stables with their beasts, as they seem to be afraid of some cannibal propensities on their part. However, Joseph and I have built in our part of the stables with a construction of hurdles and poles and rope, completely surrounding our mares, which I haven't a doubt they could kick down in a moment if they chose; but it has an appearance of security which has pacified the fears of the other owners, and none of them have eventually gone elsewhere, as the old lady seemed to fear they would.

We are beginning to run short of money again, our expenses having somehow considerably exceeded our estimate, and in spite of our *renfort* at Marmande, which we thought would carry us through to Toulouse comfortably, what with the high prices at Aiguillon, and the shoeing and damages at Agen, and other unforeseen things like that, we are now reduced to thirty francs again, all told. With rigid economy, however, I think we can do it.

Tuesday, Dec. 31.—Dull day again for the most part. The Missus took her turn at frightening us this morning, by breaking out into slight swellings about the legs: the *garçon*,

and all the other people who were using the stable at La Magistère, took upon themselves the *role* of Job's comforters, and it must be allowed did it remarkably well, all being unanimous in their opinion that the swelling would develop itself into something very serious, and the mare would be laid up helpless before we had gone five kilometres. But we couldn't afford to wait, even if we had been willing to listen to the voice of the siren in the shape of the proprietress of the Hotel du Cheval Noir, who dilated to us on the many attractions in the form of pretty walks, not to speak of her own company, that we should find at La Magistère: it appeared that her hotel was connected by ties of blood with the butcher and baker and milkman of the place. This we learnt from Joseph when we were discussing the probable reasons for her anxiety for us to stop: so that her persuasions did not altogether originate from the favourable impression we had created on her, and this likewise explained the readiness with which she caved in, in our little dispute last night.

So we set out at 8.30, the proprietress sinking any resentment that she may have entertained towards us so far as to wish us a good voyage, and to promise us an easy journey to Castelsarassin, with no hills. But we subsequently found that she had either wilfully deceived us or else was too anxious to please, as by far the larger half of our day's journey has been one steady bit of collar-work, and we have walked every step of the twenty-nine kilometres we have made to-day. Our road at first lay along the Garonne, which lay below us to the right as we steadily mounted higher and higher, with no relief by even the smallest stretch of downward incline. Mary Ann was showing no symptoms of relapsing into her old wheeze, but the Missus was evidently

feeling the work in her sick legs, and we were very nervous lest our friends at the stable should prove to have prophesied rightly.

We passed several caravans *en route*, or at anchor by the side of the road every now and then, this being the time for fairs, when there are a great many such people on the move from place to place. One that particularly struck us for its simplicity, not to speak of the ingenuity of its proprietor, was drawn by two dogs and the proprietor's wife, he himself sitting on the step in front leisurely smoking his pipe. And we have passed to-day more vehicles of every sort and size on the road than we have ever done before, all full up to the brim with happy-looking holiday folk bound to their respective paternal roof-trees to celebrate the beginning of the New Year. They all saluted us with best wishes for the anniversary, and their dogs—for they most of them had dogs in attendance—exchanged compliments with James, who seemed to know that now is a time for universal good-fellowship, and laid aside the warlike demeanour which he has been displaying the last two days. Joseph suggested fomenting the Missus's legs with vinegar when we stopped for lunch, so we tried the experiment for the first time of lighting the stove while in motion, in order that we might have the vinegar ready hot directly we stopped; but it was a signal failure, and only resulted in a general disarrangement of soot and smoke all about the interior of the caravan, so we had to desist for fear of suffocation, and we shan't try to do it again.

We reached Malauze at eleven, and put up at the Café Boulet, in the stable of a very pleasant grandmotherly old party who cultivated pigs and turkeys, and who came and chaffed Joseph and me somewhat unmercifully while we were

doctoring the Missus, and when she saw us in difficulties about administering a dose of *thieul* to the Missus, suggesting we should grow, or that she should run round to her son, the carpenter's, and fetch a ladder to enable us to reach up to the mare's mouth properly. Joseph is almost as keen an advocate for *thieul* as for a bran-mash on all occasions, and as, so far as I can find from Youatt, it doesn't do either any harm or any good, I have usually indulged him in this respect. Anyhow, there couldn't have been much risk in the administration of the dose to-day, for I having only a very oscillating log to stand on to pour it down the Missus's throat, she got very little of it into her mouth at all, and certainly not more than an eighth of that went down. Joseph had laid his hat down just on the other side of her, and most of the bottle poured straight into that. James, meanwhile, having tried to get the pigs and turkeys to play with him, and failed, went off for a walk round the village. It is a pity James can't write, as he has always made a point of taking a thorough survey of all the places we have stopped at or passed through since he has been allowed to run, and he could make a much better journal out of his travels than we can ever do. I generally have to superintend the horses, while Peg cooks the luncheon, so we only get the most superficial view of places.

We left Malauze at one. The old lady didn't want us to pay anything, but said she would be very glad to sell us either a turkey or a pig if we liked to buy it of her; but we had to decline, as we certainly couldn't accommodate a pig, and it would be a very tight fit for a turkey as well, even in sections in the limited space of our oven, besides the bother of plucking it. So we had to press fifty centimes on her, which was the utmost she would take, and she paid us the

compliment of saying we were quite the nicest caravan people she had ever come across. By the way, talking of plucking things, we have had to get rid of poor Joseph's *gibier* remains, which, not having been properly embalmed, were beginning to get rather troublesome. We did it surreptitiously, the day before yesterday afternoon, out of the back windows as we came along, for fear of hurting Joseph's feelings.

We had a steep climb up all at one go till we had mounted another 200 feet by the barometer; we unfortunately hadn't kept account of how high we had come up before lunch; and then we had a splendid view down below us of the junction of the Tarn and the Garonne, both rivers with thickly wooded banks, and gradually approaching their meeting-place at an obtuse angle to each other through a fertile plain with large patches of forest dotted about it; and away in the distance beyond the plain lofty snow-covered mountains, probably offshoots of the Pyrenees. Now at last, after twenty kilometres climbing up, we began to descend very slightly till we came to Moissac, and then we crossed the Canal de Midi, and at last turned to the right and due south, in which direction we are going to continue till we get to Toulouse, when we shall be sixty kilometres nearer the sun, and we trust sincerely out of these perpetual fogs.

From Moissac to Castelsarassin the road lay as straight as it could go, and as flat as it could lie, taking no advantage to itself and giving none to the mares, for the whole of the intervening seven kilometres. There were some stones, but the road was for the most part good; but the worst of it was, that we never seemed to be coming to the end of it. At last our hearts were rejoiced by meeting people walking out

along the side of the road,—lovers, no doubt, many of them, registering a new stock of vows for the coming-in year: to us they were like Columbus's birds, and we knew we must be nearing our destination. We reached Castelsarassin eventually a little after half-past six; our average to-day has only been about $4\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres an hour. We had a little difficulty about finding a place to put up at: as the first *aubergiste* or hotel proprietress, whichever she wished to be called, could not guarantee that the shadow of her house would protect us from an incursion of the police, as we have generally found hitherto it is supposed to do; so we came on through the town, along a very well-paved street of medium width to the boulevard on the other side, where we are now drawn up in front of the Hotel de l'Abeille. Our host, who appeared to have just woke up, and was not very coherent, couldn't, for some reason or other, take the mares in, though he says he has stables; but he directed us to his brother's over the way, where we found the accommodation very comfortable, something similar to that at Agen.

We have been for a walk to the post and got three letters, which have been waiting for us for nearly a fortnight. Then we went and did some necessary shopping of meat, vegetables, and groceries, which has made a considerable hole in our finances, and we have only got fifteen francs left; and it seems as if it will be almost positively necessary to stop here to-morrow, as, though the Missus isn't actually seriously bad yet, it would be rash to go on without a good day's rest and bandaging. I don't think, however, that we can get very many unforeseen expenses into the next two days, and our ordinary ones, now we are well stocked, oughtn't to exceed the fifteen francs; and by the middle of the third day, unless we have exceptionally bad luck, we ought to be at Toulouse.

James nearly sent an old woman into a fit this evening by suddenly jumping on her, and attempting to seize the New-Year's cake which she was carrying home. We are now sitting waiting for the New Year to come in : we are keeping up the time-honoured old custom of keeping the door open, but though the snow is falling thickly again outside, with the fire in our stove burning brightly we are very comfortable, and there could be many worse places than this to spend the last hours of the old year in. The town is wonderfully quiet, but Peg says the French don't as a rule trouble themselves about the year that is going out : they have got tired of that, and are only thinking about the new toy, so to speak, to come.

Twelve has just struck. A happy New Year to every one !



CHAPTER VIII.

STILL AGAINST TIME—FINNIAN—GRISOLLES—COUTENSART
—TOULOUSE.

1890.

Wednesday, Jan. 1.—The New Year has not begun very propitiously. It has been a miserably wet day all day: poor Peg was in bed all this morning with neuralgia; not altogether unconnected, perhaps, with the good old New Year's Eve custom of sitting up last night: Joseph has been on the sick-list all day with a bad bilious headache. The mares, however, have been quite well; the Missus's legs are again reduced, by constant cold water and vinegar bandaging, to their normal size.

I went out in the morning in the rain with James to make a preliminary survey of Castelsarassin. Its chief constituent parts are one long narrow street up from one end of the town to the other, and another long narrow street down back again, with little alleys interjoining the two; and to the right of the down street a large square with houses on two sides, the Cathedral on the third, and the boulevard, which runs right round the town, on the fourth. The houses all look more or

less old, and are very high and rather gloomy looking, many of them giving the idea that the windows have been an afterthought, and that when first built the houses were meant as much for private fortresses as anything else. This may, however, be only a fancy of my own, based on the derivation of the town's name, favoured by some antiquarians, from its foundation by the Saracens; and I must own I am rather prejudiced in that direction, as I always had a very strong predilection for that fine old race of warriors. The other derivation is Castel-sur-Azin, the Azin being a little stream running somewhere through or close to the town. The paving in all the streets was the best and the most comfortable to walk on that I have yet seen in any town we have passed through, consisting of long round pebbles set into the ground with their upper surfaces ground down flat, so that one doesn't run that constant risk of twisting one's ankle that one does over ordinary foreign cobbles; as well as being the prettiest to look at, the stones being most artistically arranged in white diamonds point to point all along and across the streets on a black ground.

The streets were very quiet, the people, I suppose, being all driven to celebrate their *Jour de l'an* indoors on account of the weather: all the people we met in the course of our walk were one lame man singing a very lugubrious dirge in praise of the New Year who asked for a sou, and one old man with no teeth who asked me the time. There were several dogs wandering about, however, in a purposeless sort of way, a good many of whom James invited home to lunch. They all accepted, and sat round in a semicircle in front of the Escargot while we were having our lunch, waiting for James to hand them down something; but I am sorry to say that he ate all we gave him himself: it was only two chop

bones, certainly. We gave the poor doggies what we could spare beyond that, as we didn't like to disappoint them; but James shouldn't have invited them in that reckless manner, considering the somewhat straitened circumstances that we are in.

In the afternoon Peg came out for a little turn, and we went to see the Cathedral. It is not a very beautiful specimen of architecture, being something like a Methodist chapel with a cathedral lantern on the top. James perpetrated a most uncalled-for assault on a little girl, who was not even carrying cakes, and knocked her down; and when we went to pick her up she seemed to be more frightened than comforted by our appearance: and no coaxings on our part were of avail to disabuse her of the opinion that she jerked out between her sobs that we were bad wicked people who had set our wolf at her to eat her up, and she was going home to tell her mamma. However, we have heard nothing more of it, so we suppose her mamma took a more rational view of the matter. James made pretty free with all the houses we passed that he could get into, but I don't think he got further than the entrance passage in any of them, and his diligent search for anything he could pick up went unrewarded, even by a solitary cat.

There is an awful pump in our immediate neighbourhood, which whenever it is used is enough to wake the dead. It began at five o'clock this morning, and has been going on at intervals nearly ever since, though the odd thing was that we were never in time to see anybody actually at it; and we were almost supposing that there was some ghostly agency at work—some defunct Saracen maiden or something of that nature: when at last, on my going to get some water for myself, I solved the mystery by discovering that it was the

handle was very loose, and the wind swaying it backwards and forwards making it creak as if somebody was using it. I had to refill the cistern again to-day, and was again asked, this time by the hotel proprietor, if it was an electric light I was working. We find from Joseph that the hotel proprietor and his wife have the reputation of not being quite all there, which may account for his rather strange manner when we arrived last night. They both experienced a severe mental shock when their stable adjoining their hotel was burnt out three months ago, and have never got over it; the stable has never been rebuilt either. However, they are most kindly disposed people, and have been very good to Joseph, who has been spending most of his time on an arm-chair in front of their kitchen fire.

We have had further demands on the common purse to-day, as we have run out of corn and bran, and we have only nine francs left now. The situation at present is fast getting pleasantly exciting: we have overhauled the larder and put ourselves on rations; but if we don't get to Toulouse on the day after to-morrow, we shall have to solve the problem of how to live on nothing a-day, and save something out of that for emergencies. However, we have all sworn to stick by each other to the last, and if the worst comes to the worst, we can perhaps make shift to work our way along with James's three tricks; and when I was younger, I used to sing a song the last verse of which was given standing on my head, besides that somewhat perilous trick of sitting on a Windsor chair, and going right backwards chair and all on to the floor, without being supposed to hurt one's self; both of which I think I might be able to do still if I were put to it, and might bring in some assistance of a pecuniary or other nature—but I think I should keep the chair-trick for

an encore. Peg could go round with the hat. As we are always being taken for a show, why not turn it to some account ?

There are revellers singing the Marseillaise in the distance going about the town somewhere, but there is a want of fervour about their sentiments, which is probably caused by the rain. James has just woke out of a troubled sleep and mistaken my foot for a rat. He is now rubbing himself in the corner by the door.

Thursday, Jan. 2.—We are only one stage from Toulouse now. It rained very hard all last night, and was pouring still when Joseph came round this morning at six to call us, apologising for not having come at four; and it was pitch-dark too, so we told him to go back to bed, but he only went to harness the mares. Joseph has been constantly trying to impress on us every day as we go along that the proper way for us to travel is to get up at four, or at latest five, in the morning, and make an early start, and so, by having plenty of time before us, be able to go always at a walk, under which conditions we could do much greater distances every day; but partly owing to our own, no doubt in Joseph's eyes, ridiculous notion that a pleasure excursion is to be treated as a pleasure excursion, and not as a journey to be got through at all hazards or sacrifices in the shortest possible time, and partly, indeed not altogether by any means the lesser part, owing to Joseph never appearing when the morning comes till seven o'clock himself, and often not till half-past, he has never succeeded in obtaining his darling desire. This morning was the nearest he has ever got to it; and then, when we were at last ready to start, a little after eight, he dawdled so over the last finishing touches to the harness, that we didn't actually get off till close upon nine. Perhaps,

however, it was the outcome of despair sprung from a down-trodden hope.

The *garçon* of the stables came across to be paid, with his little dog, whom we recognised as one of James's guests of yesterday; but he had evidently been on the spree the night before, and presented a most disreputable stop-up-all-night appearance, with the torn and draggled remains of a yellow Vandyked paper-collar hanging round his neck. I never saw a dog so distinctly suffering from a headache. James, the Pharisee, would have nothing to say to him, but sat at the top of the steps, and sniffed in a most contemptuous manner. The *garçon* appeared to be a little confused too. We paid him for the stabling, but he wanted a franc more, so I offered to take back one of the two francs I had given him, and give him a two-franc piece instead, to which he demurred, saying that he wasn't going to be cheated out of what he had honestly come by already. I represented to him that we didn't owe him two francs more—to which he assented—and if I gave him the two francs, and he gave me back one franc, it would be the same as if I gave him one franc; but he couldn't see that: he would take the two-franc piece, but he wouldn't give up what he had already got. I then proposed that we should leave the fact of my having given him the first two francs out of the question altogether, and suppose that I only owed him one franc, and wanted change for a two-franc piece, at which he exclaimed, "Oh, it's change you want, is it?" and promptly pulled his purse out of his pocket, and produced an entirely fresh franc, and so the difficulty was at last settled. Then we said good-bye to the host and hostess of the hotel and left.

It had stopped raining when we started. The roads were

better as regarded stones, as we had found them throughout Tarn et Garonne ; but they were very muddy and heavy, and for the first four kilometres we were still going up, so, though the mares started briskly enough, being thoroughly recuperated for the time being by their rest, we soon dropped to half-speed again. At St Martin, a little village we passed about three-quarters of an hour after leaving Castelsarassin, we passed the first diligence we have seen yet. Then we continued at a pace varying between half-speed and a walk, through St Porquier and Escatalens, both little villages of no great significance, the country round being very flat right away to the spurs of the Pyrenees in the right, and some other hills in the left distance. The weather was very misty still, though the sun was making more and more successful efforts to break out, and at last, about mid-day, did so effectually.

There were a large number of birds about here, rooks, and a host of other smaller species, and Joseph waxed very enthusiastic on the opportunities afforded here for the chase, saying that he had no doubt that this was a great country for sportsmen ; and, sure enough, just before we reached Finhan, we met a gentleman attired in all his glory of hunting-cap, velvet coat, top-boots, French horn, network game-bag, and gun, and enough dogs to make up a respectable pack of beagles, which, if they were not actually, they very strongly resembled. We were wondering what he could have come out to shoot. To our minds it couldn't be anything less than a wild boar, but he very soon satisfied our doubts by suddenly turning aside off the road, throwing himself on to one knee with his gun at the present, and, after taking deliberate aim of quite two minutes, blazing into a flock of sparrows who were feeding on the ground.



CHASSEUR FRANÇAIS.

Joseph was delighted : we can't say that we were particularly though I don't think he hit anything after all.

We stopped for lunch at a small outlying farm of Fiuhan, which itself lies to the right of the main road. Peg and I went into the village, and after three unsuccessful efforts at farmhouses to get eggs, at last found our way by means of repeated directions from the villagers, who were a most kindly disposed, pleasant set of people, to the village shop, which was of very much the same nature as an English village shop, where one can get anything from a billycock hat to a farthing candle. There we bought five eggs, two metres of bread of a very coarse description—the only alternative being two sort of cart-wheels of a very much coarser description—and a fivepenny bottle of wine; and thereby, from what the stout good-natured lady of the shop told me, I believe, cleared out all the provisions that were left in the place. However, nobody seemed to bear us any grudge. A young man, who was wheeling a barrow to the main road, seeing that we were in some degree embarrassed with the carriage of our varied and somewhat unwieldy purchases, gave them a lift, all except the eggs, which I kept for greater safety in my pocket, and we were followed by a curious and friendly crowd, come to find out where we had appeared from in this rather mysterious manner; they having, as one of them informed us, knocked off work for the time being for their *déjeuner*.

They were nice-looking people, most of them, and seemed to be smaller than most of the villagers we have seen yet: probably we shall find them so as we get farther south. They took great interest in the Escargot, and Peg and I escorted some of them over the interior, with the arrangement of which they were highly delighted, especially with

the oil-kitchener, which was lighted at that time for cooking the luncheon. Then they stood on the ground on front while we lunched; and an old grey-bearded man, who acted as chief spokesman, told us all about the attractions of their neighbourhood. There were two Marquises living close by, only they were both dead, and their places had been thrown open to the public, and were quite worth visiting; and there was plenty of shooting and fishing, and—did we like bathing? he had travelled, and he had always heard we English liked bathing—there was very good bathing in the canal. Why would we not stop there some time, and they would do their best to make us content? We were almost tempted to stop, and if it had only been better weather, and we could have devised some means, which might have been done, for settling our money difficulty, very likely would have stopped; but we thought it better on the whole to decline this very flattering invitation. We have never met with such a reception yet, so we promised to stop next time we came along; and then, when we had finished lunch, we had a general shaking hands all round, and left them all waving their hats and hands to us till we passed out of their sight round a bend in the road.

We had a capital road all the way to Grisolles. It was mostly collar-work, indeed, but no stones; and the sun came out bright and warm, and cheered the mares' spirits, so that they brought us nearly the whole way at a trot. We passed through Montbequi, Bessens, and Dupenthal, all closely following on each other. The type of village is changing a little now as we get south, the houses being built more suitably for long spells of hot weather. A little before reaching Grisolles we passed the Montauban road branching off to the left: Joseph's birthplace, and he is very

keen to go and see it if possible from Toulouse; but as he left it when he was three weeks old, and neither of his parents were natives of the place, I should hardly think that his visit could be much more than a matter of sentiment.

We reached Grisolles at 3.30; twenty-nine kilometres again: our average to-day has got up to six in the hour again. We have put up in front of the Hotel de Lion d'Or. The stables are very nice, and well ventilated. Joseph has different ideas about ventilation to mine, and prefers no air at all, as we have found French drivers do as a rule. We have been strolling about the town all the afternoon, but have found nothing of any very great interest, except a bowling-alley, where I had a friendly game with the *maire*, who is also an undertaker in private life, and others, I presume, of the corporation. Peg meanwhile talked to the hotel proprietress, and was admitted to her inmost confidences as to her having been three times a widow, and being now contemplating matrimony for the fourth time, what she thinks of the contemplated one, and all her own and her relations' ailments, &c., &c., till Peg says she feels quite like one of the family. That is rather Peg's fate. I have never known her talk to the most complete stranger for ten minutes without at least finding out what the stranger's great-grandmother's Christian name was.

James has met with a sad accident to-day. He will persist in biting at the wheels when he is running alongside, after the manner of collies: he has been warned not to, and chastised more than once for it; but to-day he has done it once too often, and as we were going along this afternoon we suddenly heard a fearful yell, and looking back, saw poor James hobbling to the side of the road, and then sitting down and looking after us, crying and holding up his paw

to us in a most pitiful manner. I went back and found he had got it under the wheel, and it has been most fearfully crushed; so I carried him to the caravan and lifted him in and put some vaseline on the wounded paw; and he has been lying on a mat close to the bed ever since, licking it, and gently moaning. However, he hasn't lost his appetite, and his licking will probably do it as much good as anything we can do.

Only four francs left; but we have a magnificent potato-pie and a good lot of vegetables to carry us through to Toulouse. We are going to bed early, however, to make a really early start for once, and try and save a meal that way.

Friday, Jan. 3.—Here we are safe at Toulouse, and having got to our money, in the lap of comparative luxury again! We took the alarm last night, as, with the exception of yesterday morning, it has hitherto never had the slightest effect on Joseph, and we didn't dare trust to the chance of his making two exceptions two nights running: the consequence was, that I was up as I wanted to be at 5.30, and having put the kettle on, I went and gave the mares their corn to save time, and then after some difficulty found, and with still more difficulty, got Joseph out of bed. It was pitch-dark, and there was a fog as well: we had effected a purely burglarious entrance into the stable—at least not exactly burglarious, as the stable-door had been left unlocked in the most confiding manner, but surreptitious, and we could have helped ourselves to any other of the horses that we liked, as there was not a soul about; but we contented ourselves with our own, and when we had groomed them as well as we could by the feeble light of the lantern, and harnessed them and put them to, we had to wait some little

time before we could knock up any one to pay him. At last a very sleepy *garçon* appeared; his charge was 1 franc 50 centimes, so that we left Grisolles, at 6.30 precisely, with only 2 francs 50 centimes in our pockets.

We felt our way through the silent town, and then got on to what felt like a very bad bit of road; or perhaps it may have been that we felt it more in the dark, and besides, the mares, perhaps a little frightened at the novel circumstances, were stepping out at what seemed to be even a better pace than usual; but anyhow, we had put off breakfast till after we started, and we now found taking our meal was attended with some difficulty. Pouring out the tea was quite a work of art, as was also getting our cups when it was poured out safe up to our mouths; and when we had finished, rinsing the cups out and hanging them up on their hooks again without any accident was a feat that I don't think a Chinese juggler would have despised: the particularly ticklish part was just after one had got the handle over the hook, to time exactly the moment to let the cup go, before one brought one's whole weight to bear on it, and pull it apart from the handle.

We passed a village in the dark, Pompignan, I think, and the frontier into Haute Garonne; then the sun feebly displayed himself through the fog, and we took in our lanterns. We now dropped to half-speed again, as we had entered on a succession of heavy stones, which we could see. The country, so far as we could tell, was very flat, it being in fact the plain of Languedoc itself on which we had entered, though it didn't present that sunny gay appearance that all the old troubadours' and other people's songs had led us to expect from it. Joseph rather amused us by giving us a long disquisition on the iniquities of the toad race, a fine specimen of which we

passed about this point: he wanted to run over it, and was very much annoyed when we wouldn't let him, telling us in the best of good faith that toads are most dangerous animals to meet, having been known to leap at men's and horses' throats and bury their fangs in them and suck the life out of them; and no arguments or appeals to common-sense could shake him in his belief. Joseph has still been regretting that we have no gun with us all day to-day, as there were such a lot of sparrows about; he has the true instinct of the sportsman—the French variety.

We reached St-Jury, just about half-way, fifteen kilometres, at nine; we tried to put up, both there and again at Espinasse, which lay about two and a half kilometres farther; but we could not hear of any stabling, so we went on to La Coutensart, twenty kilometres, which we reached at ten, our average having declined again from the stoppages and the heaviness of the road over the last few kilometres. We put up at a little roadside *auberge* just beyond the village, the best which La Coutensart, which really consists of only a very few houses, afforded; but the *aubergiste* and his wife were a kind cleanly old couple, and did everything in their power to make their little cart-shed "something like fit for our magnificent mares," as they said; and when we were settled, went off to call all their fellow-villagers, including the old man's mother, whom he brought out of bed for the purpose, to look at us. We have found the people far more lively and interesting the last two days than before: I suppose they must have some of the imaginative disposition of the old troubadours handed down to them.

We had a second breakfast while stopping there, to make up for our first defective meal, as well as for the earliness of it; and we stopped there till nearly half-past twelve, the villagers

also stopping looking at us all the time, one or other of them occasionally stepping forward and asking us to decide some question as to our domestic or other arrangements which had been in discussion amongst them. Peg particularly won their hearts by inviting the old mother up to sit inside the Escargot: we got her up with some difficulty, and put her on to one of the lockers, whence she detailed her sensations to the admiring assemblage out of the window; and we had an awful job getting her down again, it requiring the joint efforts of myself and Joseph and her son standing on the footboard to lower her, and all the rest of the male members of the crowd below to receive her into their arms, to accomplish it without accident to the good old body. When it came to paying for our stabling, which amounted to 60 centimes, there was actually not sufficient change amongst the whole population of the place for a franc, so we had to take it out in carrots and turnips: it didn't matter much as it happened, as there was not much room for an accident in the ten kilometres that we still had to go, but it reduced the contents of our purse to 1 franc 50 centimes—or, as we discovered after a vigorous search, as we felt it was best to be quite on the safe side, 1 franc 60 centimes, including a 10-centime piece which Joseph found had got into the lining of his waistcoat.

We said Good-bye at last to all our kind friends, and continued on our way, and had not gone along very far when our hearts were rejoiced by meeting a lot of artillery horses out exercising, by which we knew that our anxiety would soon be over. We passed a pretty park on the right, and then entered the suburbs of Toulouse. At this point I gave the reins to Joseph, and retired into the more secret parts of the interior to get rid of my attempted beard, which Peg had pronounced as not having sufficiently succeeded in its aspira-

tions, and I was therefore bound, by our agreement at Marmande, to shave off. I effected it at some peril to my life, as the Escargot was beginning to feel the macadam again, and I had several narrow shaves of cutting my throat, if not of actually cutting my head right off; but the deed was done at the expense of a good deal of my life-blood, and by the time we reached the *octroi* I stood again in all the beauty of my unadorned youthfulness, only marred by two strips of flesh-coloured plaster, placed diagonally one on each side of my lower jaw.

We passed the *octroi* with the most cursory examination, the official not even taking the trouble of coming inside, but put his formal questions to us, balancing himself on the side step. We had instructions where to go to put up, in a large courtyard through an arch off the boulevards to the right, immediately after coming on to them, so we came straight here without losing any time searching, and were safely anchored at 2.15.

The proprietress of the yard is an old lady of somewhat voluble tendencies, who gave us a hearty welcome on arriving, and has been looking in every now and then to see if we want anything. We have sent our things to the wash, as we are going to stop here two or three days to wait for Willie, who is coming out to join us here. The washerwoman happened to be in the yard when we arrived, so we had no trouble about that. She was a fat good-looking young woman, with the very shortest of print frocks that I have ever seen out of the ballet, and a pair of white-stockinged legs that would have done credit to a duchess's footman. She utterly refused to climb up our steps, as she cheerfully said she never went up stairs that she did not know, as she was getting too fat, so we had to heave down our bundles of

washing on to her like men in a steam-thrashing machine. Then we went out to the bank and got our money, and went "on the bust" at a pastrycook's shop to the entire extent of what we had left of our old resources. We both agree that never before have we ever realised what shipwrecked sailors must feel on arriving at last in port.

We delighted Joseph's heart by telling him he could pump the cistern full while we were out, a thing he has always been hankering after, but the one department of the caravan's *ménage* in which he has never been allowed to interfere. When we came back we found he had been pumping away the whole afternoon with the greatest energy, and, not understanding the system of the overflow, had gone on pumping long after the cistern was full, till the whole portion of the yard round the Escargot was reduced to a state of morass, through which we had to pick our way to our front door.

The stables here are very nice and airy—much too airy for Joseph's fancy. This is a great place for the market-gardeners, &c., of the country round to come and put up their carts. Joseph has made two or three friends with some of the carters who are in here now. He has not, however, hit it off somehow with the old lady of the yard, and twice already I have had to patch up the peace between them this afternoon. We have been out to dinner, and were going to the theatre afterwards, but the *guichet* was slammed down violently nearly on to our fingers just as we were going to take our tickets, and a hand came out of another hole and put up a board on a hook to say there was to be a *relache* to-night because of the influenza, so we amused ourselves by looking at the shops. There are wonderful dolls here, dressed in all the costumes of the different parts of the country—or, any-

low, supposed costumes—as coming along we have never seen anything more remarkable as yet than the ordinary blouse on the men, and short petticoat, seemingly of the same material as the blouse, on the women. Peg is thinking of making a collection of all of them. When we got back we found Joseph was out to dinner, and had locked us out, so we had to sit on the footboard till he came back.

Poor James has not been in mischief once to-day, as he has never been farther than the bottom of the steps, where, on our arrival, we put out a mat for him to lie on. His foot is a great deal better, but I think he finds it rather pays to make the most of it, as he hasn't been scolded the whole day.

CHAPTER IX.

STAYING AT TOULOUSE.—ANOTHER RECRUIT TO THE
EXPEDITION.

Saturday, Jan. 4.—It was fearfully windy in the night, and the wind again made a tremendous noise under the canvas on the roof. Peg profited by her experiences the other night sufficiently to vary her original suspicions as to its being a man to believing that all the cats in the place had assemble up there; but I am sorry to say I was hard-hearted enough to refuse to take any measures for ascertaining the truth of the belief. We took a long lie this morning, and did not get up till nearly ten; then we spent most of the morning polishing up and putting the Escargot in thorough order again, as, of course, on the road things can't help getting a little out of place. James is bad still. I took him a little walk round the yard, but he isn't, or appears not to be, able to put his injured paw to the ground yet. I am not altogether certain that he doesn't sometimes mistake the paw, especially if I turn away for a moment, and he thinks I am not looking; but we don't want to be too hard upon the poor doggie. But he has lost his appetite, which disquiets us more than the paw, as we have never known him do that

before under any circumstances. The old yard-lady has been detailing to us to-day all the horrors of the influenza, which is creating fearful havoc in Toulouse at present, at the rate of ten deaths a-day. We are doubting whether perhaps James has got it.

Joseph has expended a large part of his wages in a beautiful grey reach-me-down suit, and a brown billycock hat, which he has stowed away in the fodder-box, to be worn when we reach more sunny regions. After lunch we went into the inner parts of the town, and visited St Saturnin's Church, one of the oldest in Toulouse, probably founded by Raymond of Toulouse—he appears to be the principal historical association of these parts—in expiation of some of his numerous offences. The *huissier* narrated to us an exciting story of a robbery that took place there only last week. Two men took all the church plate, and then being interrupted, fled up the tower, and all along the clerestory, and out on to a roof that sloped down from the side of the church, and thence jumped to the ground, and both broke their legs, which ended that escapade.

Then we went to the post-office, and found a telegram, of which, as is so often the case with those Wheatstone's telegrams, we could make very little out of the message itself, and nothing whatever of the name. That's the worst of that system. If the man bangs down a wrong key at one end, the wrong letter comes off at the other, and the thing's done, and banging down the right one afterwards very likely only increases the unintelligibility. However, we saw it was from Paris, and we concluded it was then from Willie, and there was 8.30 towards the end of the message, so we concluded that was the train he was coming by; and from the fact of his having sent a telegram at all, we concluded

that he was coming this evening; so we hurried home to see if we could find him a room. Our old lady had only one spare room with two beds, but she said Willie would be quite welcome to one of these if he didn't mind her grandson sleeping in the other. We thought he probably would mind, but we didn't say so, only declined with thanks, and went across to the little *café* where Joseph, who has not got on any better terms with the old lady, has removed his quarters. Here we found a very comfortable room, with quite good furniture, which with the addition of a jug and basin, which there were not normally, we thought would do.

Then we went out shopping, and bought a kettle for the spirit-lamp, and a sieve, and two or three other articles of culinary use, which Peg says she can't possibly do without, but of which I don't know the meaning yet, but I suppose I shall in course of time; and we had tea at a fashionable confectioner's, where all the Toulouse world and his wife were, who stared somewhat surprisedly at us when we came in with all our newspaper parcels, all very badly done up, and many of them on the point of, if not actually, betraying their contents. I wonder why French shop-people can never do things up properly in decent brown paper. Then we went home and cooked the dinner, till it was time to go and meet Willie.

We got to the station, which is right away outside the town boundaries—those *octroi* people are uncommonly sharp—quite half an hour before the train ought to have come in, and then it was three-quarters of an hour late; but when it did come at last, Willie was in it, and we conducted him in triumph and a cab to the yard, and there displayed to his admiring eyes the Escargot, which he had never seen yet. Willie has brought a huge-looking sort

of bullock-trunk, and it really seems rather questionable where we shall be able to stow it, but we must manage somehow. James received Willie with a growl of some considerable length, which was not right, as he has known him since he (James, of course) was a puppy; but we are glad to see that he regards himself as the protector of the Escargot. We had previously rather feared that he was taking his caravan life purely frivolously. We had soup, fish, rissoles, boiled chicken, and apple-tart for dinner, with a bottle of St Estephe, in honour of Willie's arrival. He was rather done, having been twenty-four hours on his journey, so retired comparatively early, but not so early that the occupants of his *café* were not all gone to bed. We knocked for a long time without making any one hear, then at last we knocked so loud that we knocked the door open, which hadn't been locked after all, and made our way upstairs as quietly as we could to Willie's room, seeing nobody on our way but the daughter of the house for a single instant, and, from her appearance, we certainly oughtn't to have seen her for even that.

There is a cock in this yard who has been crowing all the evening hitherto against another cock in another adjacent yard, and from the energy with which they are still keeping it up, they seem likely to be going to continue at it all night.

Sunday, Jan. 5.—To-day has been a lovely day. We weren't up till all sorts of hours this morning, and Willie was even later than we were, as he was very tired, and he has a curious kind of cold, which we sincerely hope isn't going to turn out to be influenza. The old lady came round this morning, and informed us, by way of giving us something pleasant to think about, that the daily death-rate from influenza

has risen to fifteen. There is also a strike of market-gardeners, on account of the municipality having raised the *octroi* duties; the yard therefore was nearly empty all day, as scarcely any came in this morning.

There is no English church here, as we had hoped there would be, so we didn't go out at all this morning. In the afternoon we went for a long prowl round the town. There are decent pavements here for once in a way to most of the principal streets, but we have got so unaccustomed to walking on them, that we continually found ourselves edging off them again into the middle of the roadway, and thereby more than once drew upon us the observation from passers-by as to our being English. We passed five funerals in the course of our walk. We went to see St Saturnin again, and found another funeral there. Our *huissier*, with whom we made friends yesterday, quite confirmed the old lady's reports as to the influenza: he said it was positively appalling the number of deaths there are here: he believes, however, that half of them are as much the consequence of fright as anything else. Then we went to see the Musée, which has some fine pictures and a good collection of antiquities, mostly dug up in town and the country round about; but we liked the building itself best: it is an old convent, and there are some beautiful cloisters there, though they have been spoilt in places by attempts at restoration. And then we climbed up to the obelisk commemorating the battle of Toulouse, whence we had a splendid view right away to the Pyrenees, and Willie, who is very keen on everything connected with his profession, made out all the positions of the battle; and after that we took the cemetery on the way home, and came back down the hill and along the side of the canal to dinner.

James is almost quite well again, and has been trying to get out of the yard, and go about to see some of the town: twice he has got out on to the boulevards; once I only just caught him as he was turning the corner to go right into the town. He has struck up an acquaintance with a rather nice sort of half fox-terrier pup which belongs to the yard, and has made him free of the Escargot, so that we had quite a dog's party at dinner this evening. We sent Joseph to the circus, and he has come back much delighted. The cocks are still going on. I don't think they have stopped all day; and there is a shooting-gallery somewhere in the neighbourhood, where the shooters are availing themselves of the brilliancy of the moon, which is shining lovelily to-night, to keep it up even till now—10.45 P.M.

Monday, Jan. 6.—To-day has been another beautiful day. Willie did not appear till nearly lunch-time to-day: all Joseph's efforts to wake him were in vain; and when I went over myself, I found him almost completely buried, all but his nose, in the feather-bed, which had sort of closed round him after he had got on to it, and so fast asleep that I didn't like to rouse him out of it. His cold is a great deal worse, and we are beginning to feel very anxious about him: however he says it will pass off, and won't hear of us stopping on here for him; and I am not sure it won't be the best thing to go on, as if it is influenza, and the air is impregnated with it here, the sooner we get out of it and he gets change of air the better.

Peg and I went out in the morning and bought a pair of *sabots*, which Peg thinks will be a more sensible form of foot-wear for caravanning than the ordinary lady's boots she has hitherto been wearing, and in which she has felt very cold: and we got a 'Standard' about four days old.

Then we came back, and found Joseph had been occupying our absence by a general clearing and tidying of the Escar-got according to his lights; but unfortunately his lights were not the same as ours, and the result was not much better, if at all so, than that of the tidying of one's study at home by the well-meaning housemaid; and we had to search for everything we wanted, and put it back in its proper place, with strict injunctions to Joseph never to attempt to do anything of the sort again. Poor Joseph was rather disappointed, but we put him to pump, and he very soon forgot his troubles.

We didn't go out in the afternoon, as Willie didn't feel up to it, but borrowed a bench from the old lady and sat in the sun, Willie and I smoking, and Peg reading the paper, with James alternately prowling in an objectless sort of manner round the yard, stopping on the way to look through the bars of the gate at the world beyond where he was not allowed to go, and lying on a mat at our feet: and the five market people of the neighbourhood who had not struck—I wonder what the French for “blackleg” is—sitting in the shade on the opposite side of the yard, evidently wondering when the performance was going to begin. All we could do, however, in that way was the lighting of our pipes, which, owing to a slight breeze, and the vile character of the French match, was productive of various more or less acrobatic manœuvres and postures, and finally ended in a grand united tableau by the whole strength of the company, Peg with a parasol, and Willie and I with our two hats, and all with our heads together, trying to get as much out of the draught as possible: of course we never intended this as a show, but when we had at last succeeded in our endeavours, and looked across at our opposite neighbours again, they were all smiling to such an

extent that we are sure they were just as pleased as if it had been one; and the best of it for them was that there was no hat round afterwards.

Towards the evening another caravan came into the yard, nearly as large as the Escargot, though not so well finished, and only drawn by one



very small tired-looking sort of cab-horse. The occupants of it were a very dismal-looking man and his wife, tidily dressed, but with quite the most woe-begone expression we have seen for some time. Our old

lady surprised us somewhat by informing us that they were "Joueurs de Comedie" by profession;—Hamlet's father's ghost would have been the part I should have rather put the man down for. The old lady's fears of a possible collision were rather aroused by her coming by when Willie, for want of some occupation, happened to be polishing up the revolver, and she then told us the above facts about them, and assured us there was no need for fear on our part; and when we replied that the polishing was the merest coincidence, and had not the slightest connection with these good people's arrival, she immediately went over to reassure them in their turn. James then completely broke the ice between them and us, by instituting a domiciliary visit to their abode, and unearthing a cat which they carried along with them. I, of course, went and pulled him out by his tail, which was sticking, wagging boisterously, out of the door, as he endeavoured to dislodge the cat from where she had taken refuge under the stove, and equally of course apologised to the comedian's wife, who was somewhat alarmed at James's vehemence. Then the man came and wanted to strike up a bargain with me that my company should not appear in certain *cafés*, and his should not do so in certain other *cafés*, that evening, so as not to interfere with each other's livelihood, and he was immensely pleased when I made him a handsome present of all the *cafés* in the town for his purposes: while Peg talked to his wife, and, as usual, found out all her history, which was not very eventful, being simply that of one who had been a caravanist, wandering about first with her parents and then with her husband from town to town all over France all her life; and then we parted, they starting out on their professional duties, carrying a large bag which I

supposed contained their properties, and a guitar in a case between them: we to dinner.

After dinner we put away Willie's bullock-trunk in the locker under the bed, which was a work of great nicety, there only just being room for it with Peg's dress-basket, and the odd bags and hat-boxes there were there before, and I very nearly, in the course of the engineering required to accomplish it, put myself away with the trunk on the top of me. I don't think there is room for a pill-box left there now. Willie is a little better. Joseph has recommended him a bran-mash.





CHAPTER X.

MONTGISCARD—VILLEFRANCHE—CASTELNADAURY—ALZONNE—
CARCASSONNE.

Tuesday, Jan. 7.—Lovely morning. Joseph and Willie both overslept themselves, and the washing was a little behind-hand in coming home, or we would certainly have started at seven; as it was, we got away from the yard at 9.20. The old lady was very sorry to lose us, though she took a parting shot at Joseph, telling us that he was a very bad boy, and she hoped that if ever we came back we would not bring him with us: Joseph, on his part, after we had got clear of the gate, launched forth into a tirade against her and her stables and everything connected with her. The original

way and I remember always being vexed they are not the same because when I said it was 1800 or that it was twenty-five miles across and they said it was 1800 or that it was twenty-five miles across and they said it was 1800 or that it was twenty-five miles across and they said it was 1800 or that it was twenty-five miles across.

The road on the east side of the rail-way was very wide and all the trees were large. At night there was a full moon and the wind was cold and the trees were very dark. At night we went down the side and we had a good night's sleep. There at last we came to a place where there was a house. At night we got down with our heads close to the ground because the trees were very high and they were very dark. At night we went down the side and we had a good night's sleep. There at last we came to a place where there was a house. At night we got down with our heads close to the ground because the trees were very high and they were very dark.

twenty kilometres from Toulouse in three hours, at a little *café* with a stable attached to it by the side of the road at the foot of the hill, for lunch.

There was a gendarmerie a little farther along the road, with a gendarme in undress syringing his horse's legs: both the gendarme and the horse looked very ordinary sort of productions when out of their official clothes—the gendarme especially, who, barring his pantaloons, might have been just an everyday stable-man, and not in the least calculated to inspire that awe which one feels when one meets them rigged out in all their glory. A striking illustration of the doctrines of Sartor Resartus. James certainly showed no respect for the law in this guise—I am beginning to doubt indeed if he has any for anything in any guise whatever: but anyhow, on this occasion he walked in the calmest manner into the gendarmerie, and stopped there for some time, evidently making a thorough inspection, and to some purpose too, for he came out bearing a huge bone, which he had either coaxed out of or more probably purloined from the gendarmerie cook.

After we had lunched, we climbed up into the townlet above. I have a vague sort of idea I have read about Montgisard somewhere in history, I rather think in some connection with Richard Cœur de Lion, but I have no books handy that could tell me about it, except the guide-book, and that doesn't. The old ruin turned out to be a church—a regular fraud, a brand-new one. The fraud was effected by the bells being hung on a sort of framework of masonry outside, as I believe they are often in Spanish churches, and the light shining through the framework produced the appearance of a ruined tower. We saw three hay-ricks, a solicitor's office, and six *cafés*: those, besides the church, which

was locked, so that we couldn't see what the inside was like, were all the erections of interest that we discovered. There were two inhabitants visible, one male and the other female; no doubt there are others, but they were all gone out to work in the fields or in some other town. James inspected the interior of two or three houses, but in the fourth he met with a reception he did not expect in the shape of two large savage-looking boar-hounds, and he came tumbling out again a great deal faster than he had gone in, with them after him, and never stopped running till he found himself safe at the caravan at the bottom of the hill, though his assailants only pursued him for a very short distance. When we had followed him, we found the gendarme, who had resumed his war-paint, minutely investigating the Escargot, but it was quite unprofessionally: he told us he had been in to look at the mares, and how he wished his Government would give him a mount like that; and how he wished too he could throw up gendarming, and go a trip like ours with his wife and children.

We left Montgiscard at three, Peg driving now, and continued along the road with the steep bank into which the hill had degenerated on the right and the canal on the left, till we came to Baziege, a town about as large, and rather in the same style, as Marmande. There we learnt that Villefranche was only five kilometres farther, our original calculation by the map proving right after all, so we determined to carry out our first plan and go on there. The mares made a slight attempt at rebellion: they are getting very knowing, and did not see going on again for the third time in the day after they had pulled up in front of the hotel where we had stopped to make our inquiries at Baziege; so in return we made them trot the whole of the rest of the way. The road

was flat and good, across the plain again, and the evening was beautifully clear, affording us a splendid view of the Pyrenees, with the snow still on some of the highest peaks; and we reached Villefranche at 5.30, and put up in front of the Hotel de Commerce. Except James, who has taken his usual walk round, none of us have been out this evening: Willie is still suffering rather from his cold, and I feel as if I had neuralgia coming on.

Wednesday, Jan. 8.—Last night was very windy, but the morning broke very fine, and its promise of bright weather has been well fulfilled: we have had a glorious day's journey, one to make one appreciate caravan life to the utmost. Willie was up very late this morning; he is feeling much better, but he had lost himself in his feather-bed again, so we did not get away till 9.30. I woke up with a bad attack of neuralgia myself, but the beauty of this kind of life is that one has scarcely time to feel ill, as one does when one is leading a more sedentary life, and as we proceeded on our road it passed off, and I feel all right this evening.

We started by meeting a funeral, and Joseph was thrown into a fearful state of superstitious perturbation—even amounting to a desire to turn round and go back again, as he was positive that we should meet with an accident before we reached our destination this evening. Peg was a little nervous too, but not to the same extent as Joseph; but Willie and I were heartless enough to scoff at their fears, and brute strength ultimately prevailing, we came on. We certainly didn't begin with any ill-luck, as the first four kilometres of our day's run were over quite the very best bit of road we have had yet, as hard and flat and smooth as a billiard-table. We had very pretty undulating country to our right and left, and the air was fresh and balmy,

and presently Peg had quite forgotten her first qualms, and only Joseph was left grumbling to himself that this was all very well, but he knew that it was only tempting us on to the inevitable disaster.

We passed a good many carts on the road, apparently constructed of nothing but baskets piled up to a gigantic height: if there was anybody in charge of any of them, they were quite invisible, the baskets seeming to start directly from the axle-tree, with nothing to keep them from all toppling over but a marvellous arrangement of ropes twined in and out amongst them. We passed Avignonet, a little town lying in a hole, with a pretty church on the hill above it, in half an hour, our rate of travelling up to there being ten miles an hour. There we had to wait for a moment for James, who has quite recovered now, and has been running all day again, and who, coming here upon a perfect covey of cats, completely forgot that he was following us, and turned aside to pursue them, endeavouring to persuade at least one of them to come and play with him.

We crossed the frontier into Aude a little farther on, and there the road began to be bad again: Joseph smiled sentimentally, and murmured to himself that now the mishap was coming; but we went along safely, leaving the obelisk to the memory of Riquet, the engineer of the Canal du Midi, to the right, and passing through La Bastide, that monument town of the time when England was only part of a projected vast continental empire. Willie took the reins here, and I retired to lie down on the outside of the bed for a bit, as just then a sharp twinge of neuralgia came on. James, who had been taking a hasty bath in a roadside ditch, naturally thought that if I was making myself comfortable, it was time for him to do so likewise, and jumped up on the

bed too, to keep me company, and has been very cross with me all day because I, of course, promptly removed him. Joseph next came to me with somewhat of an air of triumph, and said he was sure Mary Ann had a shoe loose, as he heard it rattling: so I had to get up again, and when we had stopped, examined all her four feet to see if such was the case: but it proved not to be so, the clicking noise being only caused by her occasionally rather overstepping herself with her near hind leg, and so bringing that shoe and the corresponding fore one together; so that it was some little time before I could get the quiet I required: but at last I got off into a beautiful sleep, and when I woke up quite myself again, and went out on to the footboard to join the others, I found we had just climbed up a very long hill, and were looking down from the ridge on to Castelnadaury.

We had a beautiful view from that point of a succession of green valleys reaching to the foot of the Pyrenees, quite refreshing after the wintry sort of country we have hitherto been used to. Then we descended again, meeting several caravans coming up, the occupants of some of which seemed amused at our arrival, calling out to us that we were too late, as the fair had ended yesterday. We passed eight windmills all in a row on our way down, and then entered the town, which lies partly on the side and partly round the foot of the hill on the opposite side of the valley to that which we had come down. Then we went right through the town, looking for a suitable place to stop at. Castelnadaury is remarkable, if for nothing else, for the scarcity of *auberges* and hotels in it, the proportion of them to the other houses being only about one to seven instead of one to three as in most other French towns: and we didn't find anything to suit us till we had got nearly out on the other side, where

we came on a sort of livery stable opening on to the main street, the owner of which was lounging at his door with his hands in his pockets, apparently dreaming or thinking of nothing in particular; but on our asking if we could put our mares up, and station ourselves outside without being interfered with, he suddenly woke up with a jump, and said he would be delighted to do anything in his power for us. So there we stopped at 12.30 for the night, as we have only made a half-day of it to-day; and we haven't had an accident after all.

We had rather a mishap at lunch, Willie, unfortunately, knocking over the frying-pan containing our buttered eggs—our last eggs—all over James. It is generally supposed that James himself was the cause of the accident, by running between Willie's legs. He howled a bit, as naturally the red-hot eggs burnt him rather, but he was soon consoled by being able to pick the fragments out of his coat when they got cooler. Willie and I had to go out and get more eggs. After lunch, Willie and I went out to look for a room for him. We tried several places, but the people all declared they were full, or that they didn't like to take in people who had no luggage with them, and couldn't even have it fetched from the station; but at last we got a top attic at the Hotel de France, conditionally, that was to say, on Willie bringing his bag from his "carriage," which he represented as being at some stables farther along in the town, in three-quarters of an hour. We went back, and having taken the bag, and put the proprietor's mind at rest as to the engagement of the room being a genuine one, Willie went to get his hair cut, while Peg and I started for a walk round the town.

There is a basin of the Canal du Midi here, and a good

lead being down in that part of the town, the principal shipments appearing to be house tiles and lumber. There is a very pretty walk for some distance along the canal, and Pop and I sat down there on a seat for some time watching the barques at their work, and understanding most of them of their conversation as one would of angles in French, while James looked and chased ducks along the bank, and then Willie joined us, looking as if he had just come out of jail, and we went back into the town, and climbed by the side of the hill by a very steep street, which was very properly named *the Rue de l'Echelle*, to a sort of platform built up as a public square, and with a rampart to it from which we got a fine view of the surrounding country. The platform is at the back of this position. It has one very wide road, but on each side only one narrow path, paved up the side of the mare. We didn't see a single stone of granite here, which leads very like that of the coast of the Land of the Giants. Then we came down to the market-place, and bought some apples from a shop, and when we had done for the first time and threw the good apples on the ground for the sake of the children, for we are not to eat the same kind of tea. There are quite a number of people to be seen at *Castellada* day, as well as seen to carry on their trade in the street. The *hotties*, or *hotties*, as far as we have seen, are a different kind from the *hotties* of my country, and a different tree, and very different in size, for three of which about a dozen are in the street, and several of them are very tall, and the most of the most of the *hotties* are very tall, and some of them are very tall, and some of them are very tall. The water here was used here as of rather fresh water, and it was very good.

While we were out walking we noticed all over the town advertisements of a wonderful English giant still remaining after the rest of the fair had gone, and to be seen on the boulevards. His portrait, given on the posts, represented him in the uniform of a Grenadier Guardsman, and judging from the height of the people who were depicted as standing looking at him, at least five-and-twenty feet high. A feeling of curiosity prompted us to go and ascertain for ourselves—first, if he was an Englishman; secondly, how much smaller he really was than he appeared in the picture. And thirdly, though we didn't think that in the least likely, if he was a Guardsman; and accordingly after dinner we all went out to interview him in his lair.

The lair in question was a low square tent with a caravan of normal length standing close to it and connected with the back entrance to it by a canvas passage through the holes in which various small boys were trying to get a cautious peep at the giant within. There was a small or wd assembled outside the entrance waiting for the party that was already inside to come out. We took our places in the queue and waited too. Two or three of our fellow-travellers hearing us talk remarked that we were Spaniards—not the very best of shots in the world, but I suppose their appearance of foreigners is limited to Spaniards. At last we worked our way up to the ticket-place, paid our fifteen centimes each, and went in. The interior of the tent was divided into two parts by a low hanging brown across the middle. We stood on one side, and presently the curtain over the door at the back of the tent was drawn aside, and the giant stalked in, accompanied by his keeper. He was in the full uniform of a sergeant in the Guards, and certainly appeared to be a fine specimen of humanity. He was fully

eight feet high, and seemed to be broad in proportion. Of course, he might have been padded, but the size of his hands and feet tended to disprove this. His keeper gave a short lecture in French as to his height and weight, and how fast he could walk, and how much he habitually ate and drank at a sitting, and the giant strode two or three times round his pen to demonstrate the rapidity of his pace, and then put his arm out at right angles, and with it cleared the head of the keeper, who was not a small man himself. Then he shook hands with the audience. When he came to us we somewhat astonished him, and also raised ourselves considerably in the opinions of the rest of the audience, by addressing him in his native tongue—we were quite sure by this time as to his being a genuine Englishman from the accent with which he spoke French—asking him how long he had been in the Guards, and what part of England he came from. To the first question he answered five years, and to the second, Shropshire; expressing himself highly delighted at meeting fellow-countrymen, and inviting us to come into his caravan at the back.

We did not quite like taking Peg, so we took her home, and then, having furnished ourselves with a small parcel of English tobacco as an offering to the giant, Willie and I went back to accept his invitation. We went in to another parade, and then, when all the rest of the people had left, stepped over the hanging, and followed him to his caravan. It was quite half as long again as ours, and without the lockers, but furnished with two wardrobes, a deal table, three wooden chairs, a coke-stove close to the door, and the bed across the back as in ours; the whole arrangement presenting a much more roomy effect than in the *Escargot*, though, of course, there couldn't be expected to be all the conveniences.

Our friend could only stand up in one place in the centre, where there was a hole cut and a sort of turret let into the roof for that purpose. We each took a chair, and he gave us some very curious old rum and water, which we would have given worlds not to have drunk, but we couldn't very well get out of it without offending him: then he took off his coat, and we had full evidence that he was all real, and, sitting in his shirt-sleeves, gradually related us his history, with considerable interruptions from time to time, when he was summoned by his keeper to go on parade in the tent.

He began by confessing that he had never really been in the Guards. We did our best to put him at his ease, by telling him that we had never supposed he really had; but he excused himself for passing himself off as a Guardsman, on the ground that foreigners never would look at him if he hadn't got some kind of uniform on. Then he went on to tell us that he was born at Market Drayton in Shropshire, where his father, a small farmer, had died leaving him nothing but a large family of growing-up brothers and sisters, and a large accumulation of debts; so finding that with all his work there was no prospect of ever doing sufficient at home to keep the ones or pay off the others, he accepted an offer made him by Wombwell to join his show, and had been travelling about in the show line ever since, at first under engagements to various circus and other proprietors, but now on his own hook. He was getting very sick of it, as was his wife, who was travelling about with him, and they were longing to get home again to their children, whom they had sent home to his brothers and sisters in Shropshire; so they were only working their way north now, and when they got to the Channel they were going to sell their caravan and cross to their native land. He told his story very simply, and

only by degrees, not in the least as if he had got it up by heart for any Englishman he might come across. I think he deserved great credit for sticking to a profession he abhorred till he had paid off his father's debts and started his younger brothers and sisters in the world, as he told us he had done.

Towards the end of the evening his wife, a nice tidy little Englishwoman, who, I should say, had been a gentleman's servant, came in from taking the money at the door, and said there were no more people wanting to come in. They had taken fifteen francs altogether in the course of the day. The giant said that wasn't bad, considering that it was not exactly the proper fair-time; sometimes in larger towns and in full fair-time they had taken as much as forty or fifty francs every day for three or four days, but then there were a lot of outgoing expenses, such as for horses, which they hired from place to place, and the two assistants, and the fees to the police for their place at the fairs. By that time it was past ten, so on the wife remarking that she was dead tired, which she looked, poor body, we took the hint, which indeed we had been watching for for some time, as we rather thought we were intruding a little too long on the giant's privacy; but he wouldn't hear of us going before this, and after he had made us drink some more rum to a safe return to our native land, we left, Willie going to his hotel and I to the Esecargot, after passing a most-interesting evening.

Thursday, Jan. 9.—To-day has been very foggy and rainy. We passed a somewhat unquiet night, owing to James, who had probably been helping some poor Castelnadaurian with his supper yesterday, evincing strong symptoms of incipient illness at about two in the morning, so that we had to turn him out to lie on the footboard, a proceeding which he re-

sented exceedingly, and kept us awake for a very long time by his remonstrances and efforts to come in again. Perhaps it was from that, perhaps—though I sincerely hope not—it meant that I am in for another series of attacks the same as I had last summer,—let us not even suggest that it had anything to do with the giant's rum last night; but anyway I had another fearful bout of neuralgia all over the top of my head when I woke up this morning, and I did not at all regret that, owing to Willie's late appearance from his hotel, we didn't make a start till 9.15.

Willie excused himself, though, indeed, there was scarcely any need for it, partly for the above-mentioned reason, partly because we are beginning to get quite used to it, and rather to look on it as the regular thing, by telling us that he had been so much not called, that not only had he had to wake himself, but he couldn't get any one to bring him any hot water; and even when he had finished dressing, after he had shouted and whistled and stamped about in vain, for a long time, he had had to put the money for his room in a piece of paper addressed to the proprietress, and come away without having seen a soul.

We had a steep incline down out of the town, and then came to a place where two ways met. This was quite out of keeping with our map, which ignored the second road altogether, so as there was nobody near to ask, we took the one to the right as pointing slightly more in the south-easterly direction which we wanted to go in, and rattled gaily along a capital bit of road for nearly three kilometres: then we at last met three peasants going to their work with their spades in one hand and holding their blue cotton umbrellas over their heads with the other, and it occurred to us that it might be as well to ask them if we were on the right road;

and as might almost have been expected from the usual run of such things, it turned out that we weren't, so we had to go back the whole three kilometres, feeling rather foolish, not to say cross, and take the left-hand road. This brought us at once to a big hill, on which we nearly stuck; and when we had surmounted that, I retired to lie down again, and slept the sleep of the peaceful till we pulled up in front of the Alzonne Hotel de Commerce for lunch. The other watch reported that the road had been comparatively uninteresting, —a long stretch, more or less flat, with only one village, Villepente, and only an occasional labourer in the fields to vary the monotony.

We stopped at Alzonne an hour only, as we wanted to get the mares safe into their stable for the night out of the rain, which was still continuing in a steady drizzle. The scenery to Carcassonne was a great improvement on the first part of the day: we passed right through a range of very considerable hills, of wild and rocky appearance. I think they are the beginning of the Cevennes. The roads became very hilly as well, but they were good, and the mares wanted no doubt to get in out of the wet as much as we did, so that we sighted Carcassonne Cité, standing on its hill, about three o'clock. The country round Carcassonne itself was flatter, and given up to vine culture, a great many of the vineyards being put under water after the manner of our water-meadows at home. We reached Carcassonne—thirty-five kilometres—at 3.45, and very soon found a place to put the mares up at, an *auberge* close to the railway at the entrance to the town, we being drawn up beside a piece of "eligible building land" on the opposite side of the road.

We went to the post, where we had to wait a preposterous time for our letters, while a man was getting a post-office

order. People in France seem to be always getting post-office orders, and the officials do take such an unconscionable time making them out. We only had time to do the Grande Place after that, and found a hotel for Willie, and then come home to dinner.

It is still raining, but the sky gives some promise of an improvement. My head is much better. There is a fearful noise going on at this moment on the railway. Peg suggests earthquakes, but I think it is only all the engines blowing off for the night.



CHAPTER XI.

CARCASSONNE—MOUX—NARBONNE.

Friday, Jan. 10.—Dull, but not altogether unfine. Willie was later than ever this morning. He had not overslept himself, but he found a shower-bath and a barber and all sorts of luxuries at his hotel, and appeared at last looking quite spruce, and very unlike a caravan traveller, so much so that we felt constrained to ask him if he minded walking with us. Not that we don't do our best to keep ourselves as neat as possible, but we can't expect to come up to looking as if we had just come straight out of handboxes. We have reason to believe Willie had his hair cut again. I never knew any one have his hair cut so often as he does. I wonder that it doesn't give up trying to grow. As it was, we had to call for him on our way into the town, as we had made up our minds to stop till after lunch, and spend the morning doing Carcassonne.

It is an interesting old town with very narrow streets and old houses, and the old ramparts still remain almost perfect all round one side, overlooking the boulevards, instead of having been pulled down to make room for them, as in most French towns. Besides the usual boulevards there is a fine avenue

running down one side, with a park opening out of it on the bank of the Aude, where we sat and gazed at the old Cité, a castle, I should say, almost the size of Windsor, and placed very like Windsor, on the top of a hill on the other side of the Aude—a very important stronghold, I believe, in the olden time, with its old stone bridge connecting it with the town on this side. The people here are very dark, and mostly good-looking, rather of a Spanish type; I suppose a relic of the old times when the borders of France and Spain were very much mixed up, and indeed the lords of these parts and their vassals were very much of any nationality that suited their convenience best for the moment.

We left our anchorage a little after one, passed through the outskirts of the town, over the old bridge over the Aude, and under the castle-hill. Our way at first was uphill, but it was a good road, with no stones, though we were again in luck as regarded them, as they were here, too, all piled up on each side of the road, and another day might have seen them all down. We had the bells on the mares for the first time to-day, and they don't mind them in the least: the *couvertures*, however, were very troublesome. Joseph, by the way, has annexed my best railway rug to put over one mare, while he puts the driving rug over the other, so as to make a change for them in and out of the stable: and they kept slipping down to one side, and all but tumbling off. Joseph, however, didn't seem in the least to mind climbing along the pole every now and then to put them right, while we were trotting along. I was rather glad I hadn't to do it myself; indeed I think I should have taken the rugs off altogether if I had had to.

We passed through some very fine country to-day, a continuation of what we had yesterday, only that the hills were

even wilder, and with granite excrescences cropping up plentifully: not very far out of Carcassonne we passed another old castle to the right, probably once belonging to some old baron, a thorn in the side of the lords of Carcassonne. The peasants' costumes are beginning to be more characteristic now: the groundwork is the same, but there is more display of decoration about them, both in the men's and women's, in the way of trimming and colour, and an extensive use of coloured pocket-handkerchiefs. At Trebes we crossed the railway, and for a bit we had a stretch of flat road as we kept along the Aude valley, with the hills rising close off the road to the right, and the river running to the left, looking rather like some of the upper reaches of the Thames, as far as Barbeira, a very Spanish-looking village, with equally Spanish-looking people. Here we came on a curious but somewhat embarrassing arrangement of stones, great big ones placed in sort of open trellis-work order, each rank behind the openings in the rank in front of it: the object of this we failed to discover, so suppose that it must be a custom of the country, perhaps a relic of bygone times, when they wanted to trip up the unwary traveller; they keep up the custom, though they have forgotten the reason.

Then we got back into the hills again, here avowedly become the Cevennes. They were a little tamed in places into bearing olives and vineyards, but the scenery was still very fine. The mares thoroughly enjoyed the constant variety of up and down hill, the one serving to counteract the other; it must have been quite a holiday to them after their old experiences. The carts in this part of the country are constructed principally of hay, at least they appear so, built up on the same system as the baskets the other day, on the bare axles.

At Donzens we had to cross the railway again. They certainly take their time about opening the gates in this part of the country, and make as much fuss over it as if they were opening the railway altogether. After the train has passed they wave two flags; then they blow a horn twice, and wait till it has been answered all up and down the line to the next station on both sides; then they roll the flags up, and stick them in the ground, and then they blow the horn again, this time more triumphantly; and after that they go to their little hut, and look in at the clock to see if they have kept all the vehicles which have accumulated at their gates on each side of the line waiting the prescribed time, and then they blow another horn to make sure, and after allowing five minutes to give any of their distant colleagues a chance of answering them, they wind in two or three hundred yards of steel rope on to a wheel, which I believe has to do with a distant signal somewhere, and then at last they open the gates,—all of which is no doubt done with a purpose, maybe the best of purposes, according to their lights, but it is stupendously irritating. We then climbed up and came down two more long hills, the last one being very steep as well, so much so that the collars were all over the mares' ears coming down as we reached Monx, twenty-five and a half kilometres, the longest stage we have done without a stop yet, at five.

We are stationed in front of the Hotel de l'Espagne, on the side of the street. The stables are very crowded with *commis voyageurs'* horses, but they have made room for our mares, and they are in very comfortable quarters considering. Willie and James and I have been for a walk since dinner along the road, but it is very dark, and they don't run to gas or oil lamps here, so we are not much the wiser. Joseph,

who has a wonderful idea that every one is always thirsting for his blood, just for the fun of the thing apparently, has manœuvred to get put into the same room as Willie, so that Willie can protect him against the ferocious *commis voyageurs* here. He has just been and told Willie he must come to bed, lest he should be locked out. This is a gentle fiction. The truth is, that even now Joseph is in too great a funk to go to bed by himself.

Saturday, Jan. 11.—This morning broke very stormy and windy. Joseph was late, and we very nearly had to go without milk, as there was only one place in the whole of Moux where it was to be got, and that was only open from 5 to 6.30. However, we managed to get some from the proprietor of the cows as he passed out with his herd to the fields. He gave it us as a great favour, saying that it was what he had been keeping for himself, and we must come next time at the proper hour, or we shouldn't get any. Of course we said we would be sure and not forget.

We left Moux at 8.45. The weather was improving, and the roads were good. There had been stones recently put down, but they had had a roller over them, and they were well worn in. The scenery in this part was again wild and mountainous. We had got into the heart of the Cevennes, and it was simply magnificent. At Couilhac, we very nearly stuck on a very long hill. I think the mares didn't approve of coming out in this damp-looking weather, and were inclined to be sulky, but we coaxed them up with soft blandishments, and after that they refused nothing for the rest of the journey. Indeed to-day we have achieved our fastest run on record, arriving at Narbonne, thirty kilometres, at 12.10—that is, three and a half hours.

After we had passed Lezignan, a fairly large town, nine and

a half kilometres from Moux, I had what seems to be going to be my usual morning dose of neuralgia, and I retired to the bed, where I had a splendid sleep, only being woke once at a place where we had run on to a lot of loose stones, not yet crushed down, and all hands were required to shove the Escargot through. It wasn't the mares' fault that time. They were struggling and pulling all the time as hard as they knew how, but we were almost up to the axles in the stones, and if it hadn't been for twenty or thirty *cantonniers*, who had been putting down the stones, I think we should have been there still. Then I went to sleep once more, and wasn't disturbed again till I woke of my own accord with the neuralgia quite gone away, just as we were coming in sight of Narbonne.

The last bit of road lay over a plain. We entered the beginning of the town and then turned to the right, where we found a large range of wooden buildings on the outer side of the boulevards, partly stables and partly sheds and outhouses, for the country drovers to put their cattle up in when they brought them in to market. We found the proprietor engaged in a quarrel with several drovers, each of whom appeared to want the whole place for himself and his beasts, and from the ferocious manner in which he was carrying on, we rather expected a rebuff; but as soon as he had finished, he cast aside his anger as it had been a cloak, and turning to us, welcomed us quite enthusiastically warmly, saying we were quite welcome to any space we might choose to appropriate in his stable, and we could put the Escargot wherever we liked on the open street outside, for it all belonged to him, and, his faith! he would like to see the policeman who would dare to interfere with us, who were his honoured guests.

We accordingly took the mares out, and piloting them

with some difficulty through a herd of pigs which was just being driven out of the door where we had to go in, and were running about in all the wrong directions as pigs do, led them into the stable: it was crowded with horses of all sorts and sizes, and there didn't seem to be room even for one more little pony, let alone our two big mares. Our host asserted that he would undertake to put thirty more horses in easily, but we declined trying the experiment; so as we seemed to have particularly taken his fancy, he thought a minute and said we could have two cow-stalls that had been vacated this morning. The cow-stalls proved to be really better accommodation than the stable, so we immediately jumped at the offer, and having extracted a promise from the owner that on no account should our mares be disturbed, which he said would be absolutely impossible, as did not he know whom he had to deal with—one might almost have supposed that he took us for princes and princesses in disguise—we led the mares in and made them comfortable, as we are going to stop here over the Sunday. The cowhouse is much better drained and better ventilated—according to our English ideas—than any stable we have had yet; they seem to be more careful of their cows than their horses in France.

The open space where we are drawn up has been very lively all day with cows and sheep and pigs and turkeys going out or coming in, with an occasional additional excitement in the shape of one or other of these various beasts or birds escaping from their proper herds, and being pursued and dodged about by its own master and everybody else who might happen to be about till it was got into a corner, and brought back with ignominy to its proper allegiance. There were several dogs about, mostly of a breed a very rough copy

of James, and James very soon after our arrival had first fought and then made friends with most of them, and entered into all the spirit of the fun; only if, as happened more than once, any of the escaped animals took refuge under the Escargot, he wouldn't allow any of the other dogs under, but kept all the sport of fetching it out to himself. He had a thoroughly happy afternoon—with refreshments; for another caravan having drawn up on the other side of the open space later in the day, he ingratiated himself with the young woman belonging to it, and spent the intervals between the various events going over and getting tit-bits out of her.

Peg began making a *pot au feu* almost immediately on our arrival, and so, like most cooks, preferred our room to our company during the process of its manufacture; so Willie and I went to the post to see if there were any letters. The Aude runs through the town proper, with bridges over it at frequent intervals connecting the two parts, and with walks along both sides, giving this lower part of the town a somewhat Dutch appearance. We counted fifty *savonneuses* on the river-bank, all vehemently thumping the clothes between two boards, alternately with wringing them out to such a degree of tightness that one almost expected to see them come apart in their hands; which accounts for the somewhat dilapidated state that my shirt-fronts have been reduced to since we have been in France: one wants to have one's things made of block-tin to stand that sort of usage.

There were no letters at the post,—at least the man said so, though I have every reason to believe I saw one in the bundle he was holding in his hand, and he couldn't be persuaded to let me look for myself; so we went back to fetch Peg, and then resumed our explorations. There is a very pretty slice

of park along one side of the town, where there is to be a band to-morrow; the old part of the town lies on a hill, up which we climbed through very narrow and very dirty streets to the cathedral. Only the choir is finished; I don't quite see where they would put the other part unless they built it down the side of the hill: what there is of it, however, is a very fine specimen of architecture, and not spoilt by too much of that tawdry decoration that infests so many of the finest French cathedrals. There was a christening going on while we were there, which we stopped to watch. The Narbonnais are for the most part very dark and handsome, both men and women; the *berri* is the common type of head-dress here for the men, the women tie up their heads in bright-coloured handkerchiefs.

Then it set in for a good steadily wet evening, so we turned homewards again. We bought some oysters on the way back from a woman who was retailing them in the streets. This purchase was attended with some evil consequences to the vendor's daughter, as, having no change, the former went to look for the daughter, whom she found sitting in a corner behind an umbrella carrying on a desperate flirtation with a young, and to judge from the mother's wrath, ineligible young man: they were a very good-looking couple, and we were sorry for them, for after having got our oysters and left, on looking back we perceived the mother storming at the girl, who was in tears, and the young man hovering round a little way off, not quite sure whether he dared interfere or not. We had to carry the oysters in our pockets, as the old lady hadn't any paper to wrap them in; then we bought a bottle of Chablis to drink with them, and a bottle of St Estephe for dessert, and a pack of cards to pass away the evening with,—so that altogether when we

arrived at the Escargot we did not present a too respectable appearance.

We had a fearful struggle with the oysters: we had forgotten when we bought them that we would have to open them, and we had no oyster-knife; and I think they were the most tenacious oysters I have ever had to do with. The consequence was, that we broke both our pocket-knives and a sardine-opener over them, disarranged all the interior of the Escargot, and inflicted some severe gashes on our own fingers and the furniture: and it was not till three-quarters of an hour after our usual dinner-hour that we sat down, panting and exhausted, but triumphant. How those oysters must have chuckled at first when they heard us trying to get in; they certainly died bravely, and I hope we didn't hurt them very much. We were well rewarded, however, for our perseverance, for they were very delicate and capital eating, and the Chablis was excellent. After dinner we played Nap till 10.30, and then Willie had to go to his hotel on the boulevards, which Joseph had found for him, and carried his bag to in the course of the afternoon. Joseph has got a room with the *patron* of the stable.

Sunday, Jan. 12.—Fine day but very windy. I had a bad bout of neuralgia this morning, so there not being anything to get up for, there being no English church here, Peg made me stop in bed till twelve, and dosed me with antipyrine. Willie didn't appear either till just before lunch; he said he had quite overdone himself over the oysters last night: he has read somewhere that an oyster takes a force of 1319 times its own weight to open it, so averaging the weight of those we had last night at 3 oz., the force we must have expended over two dozen of them must have been something prodigious—enough to have propelled the Escargot!

After lunch we went out to hear the band, but we only found a crowd of disappointed Sunday outers round the bandstand, reading a notice to say that there was going to be no music to-day, as the band was all laid up through influenza; so we went on to the post, where the official in charge to-day was not quite as obtuse as the one yesterday, and allowed me to look at the letters, and the one I thought yesterday was for me proved to be really so: it had been waiting here over a week. Then we went to see the Musée in the old Hotel de Ville, which once was used as a royal palace. There is a very good collection of china and antiquities there; and the rooms sacred to the memory of Louis XIII., who stopped here a good deal, with the furniture just as he had used it. There is a terrace at the back with a fountain and some fine old trees, under which we could picture the knights and dames of the olden time walking, and talking nonsense or otherwise, the former variety being in the preponderance, very much the same as they always have done and always will do, and maybe Louis XIII. strolling along on Cinq-Mars' arm, in the days before reasons of state had stepped in to break off the eternal friendship that they had sworn to each other,—and with that we passed out through a side-door into the street again.

My letter, amongst other things, told me that the Narbonne honey was considered the best in the world, and strongly advised us to try it, so we now went to an *épicerie*, where we saw pots and pots of it displayed in the window, and bought four of them—two for our own use, and the other two to take home to our relations. The *épicier* was a very agreeably disposed man, and wanted to know a great deal about England, and English manners and customs. He seemed to have been particularly struck by what he had

read about the English Sunday, and tried to get us to give him a complete account and explanation of our manner of keeping the day; but the attempted moral discussion failed signally, mostly owing to our want of command over the French language—at any rate, when it had got away into such abstract depths as that. However, we told him that we were not so blindly prejudiced as not to avail ourselves of the good things that nature and art, under Providence, had produced, and put into his window, when we came across them, which he took as a very pretty compliment, and hoped we would soon look in again. We were sorry that we thought we shouldn't be able to; but that honey proved to be so good at tea that we had to return there in about an hour and a half after all, or there wouldn't have been any left for our relations. We had a cake for tea which, I am sorry to say, did not testify as it should to the honesty of the Narbonnais *pâtissier* from whom we bought it. He affirmed, with all the appearance of injured innocence, that it was baked fresh this morning. We couldn't help thinking that it was rather dry, but trusting in the *pâtissier's* word, told ourselves that that was only the specialty of the Narbonnais cake; but, alas! when we had given Joseph the remains, he hadn't taken two bites before his teeth closed over a most unmistakable Twelfth-night doll, and the *pâtissier* stood convicted.

After tea we went out for another walk on our side of the river. We came on the fair, which was in full swing, with all its varied attractions of fat ladies, giants, merry-go-rounds, and a very shaky-looking switchback-railway, which I wouldn't have gone on if I had been paid for it. It was fearfully windy on the square where the fair was, and the people's *berris* and coloured shawls were flying all

over the place with their owners in pursuit, making it as difficult to walk about as it would be in the thick of a football-match. When we had at last, all three of us, caught our own hats therefore, we came home, and sent Joseph to the fair in our stead, with fifty centimes in his pocket, which he laid out very profitably in five shows.

The gale has got up so that we have had to put the shoes on the hind-wheels, as we found the *Escargot* was starting off on a journey on her own account. There has been a fearful family row in the caravan over the way. The woman objected to her husband bringing home five or six friends to tea, and was turned out into the cold for it, where she sat entreating forgiveness for fully three-quarters of an hour, when the brutes at last let her in.





CHAPTER XII.

BEZIERS—MEZE—GJEAN—MONTPELLIER.

Monday, Jan. 13.—To-day was fine, though still rather windy. We assembled our party successfully at a comparatively early hour this morning, and having settled our account with the amiable *patron*, who said that his heart was broken at our departing,—though why he should have taken such a fancy to us we can't make out, unless Joseph had been yarning about us,—and charged us more than the average amount for our stabling, presumably to cover the necessary repairs. We left at nine.

We found the same sort of mysterious criss-cross arrangement of stones just outside the town, but we had a satisfactory explanation of them at last—namely, that they are intended to distribute the traffic equally over the road, instead of letting it make a groove for itself in the best parts, the stones being shifted by the *cantonniers* every day. Joseph had learnt this from some of the drovers he had met at the stable. But in spite of this not altogether unreasonable purpose, the Missus began to resent the constant winding in and out to avoid them, and presently stopped dead short, as if she had made up her mind not to go another step, and the ——— having taken hold of her, as Joseph remarked, there is every reason to suppose that she wouldn't have, at any rate of her own accord; but just then a kind carter came by with his team and his big whip, and seeing our little difference with her, smiled meaningly at us, and, without saying a word, caught her such a crack with the said whip over the hindquarters, that before we had time even to thank him we were out of sight, and flying along the road at such a pace that when at last we did begin to slacken speed again, we found that we had come three kilometres in ten minutes.

The country round was all flat, with swamped vineyards, the same as we had seen before Carcassonne. We passed Coursan, and then crossed the Aude, which was about as wide at that part as the Thames at Windsor, and shortly afterwards the frontier into Herault. We had been coming all this time along a very flat road, with the Cevennes to our left, but now we began to climb again, first passing over a viaduct built over one of the valleys, half of the roadway on which was filled up with heaps of stones ready to be put down. We met another cart, and were rather



THE HUMBLING OF JAMES.

M.C.

doubtful how we were going to pass, but the carter was very obliging, as we have found all his species all the way along, and gave way, though it was really his side of the road. Just after that the Missus had another fit of the sulks on our coming to a very long hill, and we were revolving for some little time in the middle of the road before she was persuaded to face it.

We then climbed on past Nissan, another village of a Spanish type, with a clean white church, with the bells on a framework of masonry outside, and so farther, always mounting, till at last we got to the very top, and there before us saw Beziers, standing on high ground, with its cathedral prominent on the summit, and a long road winding to it from where we stood, all down-hill, to counterbalance all that we had been toiling up. The Missus had not the slightest objection to this form of road, and we ran down in less than no time, this side of the mountains being laid out in olive-yards, and, crossing the canal, came to the bottom of the steep main street of Beziers.

The Missus refused again here, and had evidently been occupying herself on the journey in instilling some of her rebellious spirit into Mary Ann, for we got no help from that quarter this time. We had another short period of waltzing round in the middle of the street, during which time a small crowd collected, and a policeman asked us, very mildly, how long we were going to stop there, to which I couldn't help replying with the Scotsman's famous question, "Did he think we were doing it for pleasure?" rendered into idiomatic French. But at last it struck the Missus that we were very probably going to put up at the top of the hill; she passed the word to Mary Ann to give over her antics, and we went up in one run to the top of

the hill, then turned back and took another short hill, which rose zigzag to the first, in a second run, and were in the Grande Place, being satisfactorily convinced that these demonstrations of the Missus were nothing more nor less than sheer cussedness.

We found a large livery-stable, where the *patron* said he could take us in, but when we had got in through a narrow arch, he wanted to stow us right away at the back in a shed with a lot of other vehicles in front of us, so we backed out again, and tried our luck at another yard a little down a street leading out of the Place. Here we took the precaution of going in first to see what sort of place we could have. We made our choice, to which the *patron* assented, and then came the question if the Escargot would go under the archways at the two ends of the stable through which she had to pass to reach the yard. She only just did it with half an inch to spare, and we drew up in the midst of an admiring and somewhat excited assemblage of carters and drovers at the side of the yard at 1.15, having made twenty-six kilometres in four and a quarter hours.

There was a good deal of live-stock about the yard, very much the same as at Narbonne, only that there were no pigs: we had scarcely got inside when James made a most unjustifiable attack on a turkey, probably anticipating as easy a victory as he had lately been achieving at Narbonne; but he found he had caught a Tartar this time, for the turkey turned on him, and there ensued a regular stand-up fight, all the other dogs and fowls and drovers, &c., &c., getting up on hay-stacks and other coigns of vantage to see. The fight lasted quite ten minutes, and resulted in the complete discomfiture of James, who came back to the Escargot looking remarkably foolish.

After lunch we went for a walk, leaving James on the footboard to take care of the Escargot. Joseph had disappeared, having a headache, and being gone to take a *siesta* in front of the *patron's* kitchen-fire. There is a small hotel under the same management as the yard, where Willie and Joseph have found rooms for the night. We went out on to the Place, where we found the remains of the fair, for which we were one day too late again. There was a most gorgeous caravan, all painted blue and gold, and the arms of all the countries in Europe emblazoned on the panels, the English arms, turned completely round, from a heraldic point of view, being very conspicuous,—with a band on the top, and a beautiful lady in an embroidered Spanish jacket and spangled continuations of a very baggy type—a sort of rational dress costume—dispensing antidotes for rheumatism to an eager crowd of buyers from the box.

We found out the Madeleine Church, a sombre sort of building, well suited for the tragedy whose memory lends it its greatest interest—the massacre of the Catholics by the Albigenses—it seems to me that it was about six of one and half-a-dozen of the other in those old times, except that one side was considerably the stronger: and then we went on in search of the Cathedral. We were some time before we succeeded, as the higher part of Beziers is a perfect labyrinth of narrow streets, and it seemed once we had got in that we would never get out of it again, and the only man we met to ask the way proved to be dumb, probably the only dumb man in Beziers, so he was not much use. However, by dint of always going up the steepest street, we at last reached the object of our search. It is a very fine old Gothic building, and looks as if it had been built to serve as a fortress as well, as it very probably was. It is

surrounded by platforms looking out all four ways, and we had a magnificent view of the country along which we have been coming these last few days,—of the Pyrenees away to the south; and in the direction along which we have to go to-morrow, the first glimpse of the Mediterranean. We made our way down by a reverse process to that we had come up, and passed through the market-place, an oblong place, shaded over with trees, and very picturesque tumble-down old houses all round it.

When we got back to the Escargot we found Joseph bursting with excitement to tell us of a gross delinquency on James's part, who finding himself in full command of the interior of the Escargot for five minutes, and with the pantry-door open, had availed himself of the opportunity, probably, in the limited period at his disposal, at the utmost inconvenience to himself, to dispose of the whole of a leg of mutton, which we had intended for our dinner to-night. James was perfectly conscious of his guilt, and instead of having bounded out to welcome us as is his wont, had squeezed himself as tightly as possible into the farthest corner near the bed, where he was cowering under the pangs of conscience—and not improbably indigestion. Summary retribution followed: we will draw a veil over the particulars; but I don't think James will so much as look inside that pantry cupboard again for some time. We had to go out and buy some chops in place of the mutton, as we are going to the theatre, and there was no time to begin another joint all over again.

When we got to the theatre, which we did rather early, for fear we should not get seats, we found that we need not have hurried, as, with the exception of ourselves in the balcony, there was only one other small boy in the orchestra,

in the whole of the house ; and it was not till another twenty minutes had passed that the rush came : about five-and-twenty young Beziers bloods in the pit. The performance was a very miscellaneous one, but we certainly got plenty for our money if nothing else : there were three short dramas of the type that the strivers for higher education through the agency of our music-halls are trying to introduce ; then four comic songs, sung by a lady of a certain age, in as many appropriate costumes, accompanied by a very cracked piano, and the small boy whom we had first observed, on the flute ; and lastly, a variety man, who in appearance was rather like Mr Corney Grain,—but far be it from me to say that his performance was in the least like that great artist's. We couldn't help laughing at it the whole time, but I must in justice add that we blushed at ourselves for doing so, for it was quite one of the most—if not the most—vulgar thing I have ever seen : when I mention that two of his best, or, from another point of view, his worst representations, were those of a Lycée boy with his first cigar, and an itinerant mandolinist, and that he acted them thoroughly in character, I don't think I need say any more.

The waits between the different sections of the evening's entertainment were nearly as long as the sections themselves, but the audience was very good-tempered, and exhibited not the slightest ill-feeling against the management. Willie and I filled up the intervals by reading the 'Petit Journal,' which we had brought in our pockets, which brought upon us the united wrath of the whole of the pit, who, looking round for something to pass the time, and perceiving our occupation, worked themselves up into quite a little *furor*, shouting to us to put away those papers, and "*à bas la politique!*" till one could almost imagine one was in

the Senate-house at Cambridge on a Degree-day. However, as we were above them, and so were quite safe, as they couldn't drop anything on to our heads, we paid no attention, and read calmly on, having the additional gratification that, besides amusing ourselves, we were doing them a like service as well.

The entertainment lasted till nearly one, and then there was another item on the programme; but the audience below suddenly stampeded as one man, and we followed their example. When we got to the yard we found we were shut out, and every one had gone to bed, and couldn't be made to hear, so we had to make a forcible entry through a defective bar in a side-gate. Peg and Willie got through without accident. I, being of rather thicker build, stuck half-way, and had to be dragged through by the others at some risk to the buttons of my waistcoat. Once inside, Willie luckily found a door open into his hotel, so went off to bed. It is a beautiful night, and quite warm.

Tuesday, Jan. 14.—We had rather a disturbed night, as there were a lot of cows in the sheds round the Beziers yard who had had their calves taken away from them, and were mourning for them the whole night. What with that, and the theatre last night, therefore, I got up with a bad headache, amounting to an attack of neuralgia, and I was not sorry when Joseph told us the first thing this morning that the mares would want shoeing very soon, and as there was a blacksmith next door, should he take the opportunity of having it done there. I tried to occupy the time during the operation by sleeping off my headache, while Peg and Willie went out for a walk; but for a long time Joseph would not leave me in peace, turning up every five minutes or so to say that I should have plenty of time for my rest,

as the blacksmith had a lot of jobs on hand, and couldn't do ours for another two or three hours at least, till at last I could stand it no longer, and adjourned his further visitations *sine horâ* with a boot.

I got up about eleven, and just as the mares were coming back from the forge, led by Joseph and the farrier. Some sensation was caused amongst the carters, &c., who had come round to admire our mares, by the Missus planting her forefoot right on the top of my hind one. A murmur of horror shivered round the assembly, arms were stretched out to catch me, and hands were plunged into pockets—those great big trouser pockets like a clown's which every Frenchman of the working classes wears, and in which he carries most of his luggage when on a journey—and in half a minute I could have drunk more spirituous liquors than I have ever done in any given hour of my life; but, why I rather wonder myself, unless it was that the Missus, being a lady, behaved and trod as such, I felt not the smallest ill effects at the time, and walked away without the slightest inclination to faint, amid the openly expressed admiration of the crowd at the fortitude of the English; but I am afraid that it was somewhat of a bogus triumph that I won for my country, for I haven't felt the slightest after-effects all day, and there was not even a bruise on the place when I took my boots and socks off. We were going to lunch before we started, off a rolled tongue which we had bought at Narbonne, but on going to the larder we found it gone. James had actually eaten it yesterday in the same five minutes as he had eaten the mutton. He was again reprimanded to the same effect as last night. It is no use leaving him to profit by experience as taught him by his after-sensations inside on these occasions, as he never

has any. We had to fall back upon omelette therefore, and after we had lunched we left the stables a little after noon.

We started by taking a wrong turning, but we climbed over a lot of rubbish-heaps and waste ground back into the proper road again, and were soon clear of the town. The Missus was again not in very first-class form. The poor beast was rather distressed with a slightly galled shoulder. We have examined the collars, and they seem to be all right, but we think it must have been produced by her struggles yesterday. However, we put some rag with cooling lotion over the place, to keep the collar from touching it, and then we went along better. The road after the descent out of the town was very flat and very straight, with the stones not yet put down. The railway ran alongside of us on our left, and the canal on our right. After passing Cers, all round were evident signs that we were approaching the sea. Sand-hills lay to our right, with those rushes growing out of them that one almost invariably finds in connection with sand-hills, and the rest of the country round was sandy or peaty, with rushes and heath in place of the olive-yards and vineyards we have been lately passing, the scenery reminding us very strongly of parts of the Dorsetshire coast, and soon beyond the sand-hills we saw the sea itself lying like a blue line about four kilometres off.

We crossed the Libron and passed Vias, and then the road became very narrow, running with a steep embankment down on each side, and it was lucky we didn't meet anything, or one of us would have probably had to go over the edge—the Pic du Loup, an extinct volcano, rising in front to the left of our course. Twenty-two kilometres from Beziers, which we did in a little over three hours, we

crossed the Herault and entered the narrow streets of Agde—the black city—all built, including its cathedral, out of the lava of the Pic du Loup, at whose feet it lies, like another Pompeii, and perhaps, like that ill-fated town, falsely secure from long immunity from disaster, and destined one day to be destroyed when the long-slumbering mountain shall rouse itself again. We are now in the region of earthquakes.

We had a very tight fit through the streets, and were very fairly in the way to lose ourselves; but a kindly old lady, who was sitting on the top of a pile of oranges in a cart drawn by a very diminutive donkey, in which she was returning from the market, offered to pilot us through. We followed in her wake along the bank of the Herault, and then crossed another bridge, which led us into the country again; rather inclining inland, but still retaining the same sea-coast character as before. We had the choice here of either keeping the more inland road to Meze or going round by the strip outside the Etang de Thou and by Cette: the second would, perhaps, have been the prettiest; but from the map it looked as if that route would have been a matter of great nicety of balance, if indeed in places it would have been wide enough across for the Escargot's wheels, so we decided on the Meze road, and followed our old lady.

We were quite rewarded for our choice by the view that we came on a little farther on: the Etang de Thou lying all along to our right, calm and blue, with the white felucca sails dotted about it, and the outer beach and the Mediterranean beyond, and at the far corner of the Etang, at the end of the outer beach, Mont St Clair, with Cette nestling at its foot, like a pretty English watering-place,

with its tiny white houses, and the masts of the shipping anchored round it; and beyond Mont St Clair another mountain,—and all this in the clearest of atmospheres, and under the brightest of suns. It was a sight to make the heart glad, a complete compensation for our long journey, even if we had wanted any, which we didn't. And then, like Nemesis of old, as if to prevent us from becoming too elate, our first mosquito swooped down upon us; but his career was brief, for he was promptly smashed, and his corpse lifted up and thrown out on to the road.

We kept up a ding-dong race with the old lady in the donkey-cart, but finally won by a head at Marseillan, where she turned aside down a lane off the main street, waving us an adieu with the handle of her umbrella. After we had passed Lazelle, a fishy-looking sort of town on an arm of the Etang which ran up here, and where we saw the Jeu de Paume for the first time, the scenery became less coast-like—vines appearing amongst the heath, and occasional plots of plough-land, where the peasants were sowing their crops, using a primitive sort of drilling-machine, like a long wine-funnel, which they held in one hand, and dribbled the seed, which they carried in a box slung over their shoulder, down it with the other. We met a good many old people riding on donkeys, with large panniers at each side, into which they put their legs, which gave them the appearance of not having any. It was beginning to grow dark when we crossed the single line of railway that runs to Cette, and we got various reports as to the length of the road to Meze from passers-by, varying from three to six kilometres: so, to make sure, we put on a little extra speed, and soon knocked off two of whatever it was: then we turned sharp to the right, and came into Meze

at a sharp trot at a few minutes past six—forty-two kilometres in six hours, and in one run.

We have got a very comfortable berth in front of the Hotel du Lion: the *patronne* is an old lady—I wonder why so many hotel-keepers' widows survive their husbands—and *très aimable*, as even Joseph allows, whose opinion of the people of the South has grown worse in inverse proportion to ours growing better. Meze is a small town on an arm of the Etang, which seems to subsist principally by fishing: for a fishing town it is remarkably clean. We went out for a walk after dinner down to the port. The moon was out, and the effect of the shipping lying on the perfectly still dark water and all the shadows was quite enough to soothe even the most troubled breast. There is a theatre here, but it is closed to-night; if we had only come last night we would have been able to enjoy the unique pleasure of seeing the "Barber of Seville" for seventy-five centimes. After we returned we played Nap, but that wretched boy Joseph kept interrupting us with reports that if Willie didn't come into the hotel at once he would be locked out. This was at half-past nine, so Willie told him to go away and he would risk being locked out, and he retired grumbling. When Willie eventually did go to bed at 10.45, he found the door unlocked after all. Joseph had only been afraid as usual of going to bed in the hotel without any of us near him.

Wednesday, Jan. 15.—Lovely day. We were up at seven, but owing to the untimely loss of Willie in his bed, which was an even more than usually soft feather bed, and various other little impediments, that more uncharitable people might have classed under the general head of dawdling, we didn't leave Meze till eleven. We were rather troubled with dogs last night, and this morning there were still large

quantities of them perambulating the streets, ostensibly for the purpose of giving the male portion of the population, when it is not pursuing its usual occupation of lounging in the sun with its hands in its pockets, something to shy stones at. This, like the *Jeu de Paume* yesterday, was, perhaps, part of our first introduction to thoroughly Southern customs. Meze is at any rate the first place where we have seen water selling in the streets yet.

We were partly delayed by Joseph having lost the key of the fodder-box,—we have constantly had a good deal of trouble with those keys: they are supposed always to hang on a nail over the road chart; but generally some one or other of us has just had occasion to use them, and has not put them back again, and now there are four of us it is worse than ever. Joseph declared positively that Willie had had them last, and Willie hadn't touched them since he gave them to Peg, and Peg had handed them to me, because I wanted to unlock the tool-chest. This last piece of evidence, however, brought them back to Joseph, as I hadn't opened the tool-chest since yesterday before we arrived at Meze, and Joseph must have had them to get the corn for the mares' supper; so we made him turn himself inside out, and sure enough they had got away into the lining of his waist-coat, he having forgotten one complete round of the crew that they had made.

Then we found that we were short of sugar, so Willie and I went on to get some, taking James with us. We went to every *épicerie* in the place; but they were all out of sugar, or never kept it, and it was only when we had descended one step lower in the social scale, and tried at a sort of ship-chandler's, that we succeeded in procuring the only half pound of white sugar in Meze, and then the shopman

seemed rather doubtful as to whether it would be good for us. It seems that the Mezians don't use sugar, or anyhow only the coarser kinds. When we got half-way back to the Escargot, we missed James. We whistled and called to him loud enough to have been heard all over Meze, but he did not appear. The last place we had seen him was in the market-square, where he was tasting gooseberries off an old woman's stall, so we went back to look for him there. We searched the market thoroughly, and inquired of every individual stall-keeper if he or she had seen anything of him, but all in vain; so we worked our way back, going up all the lanes and alleys off the main street, encountering some very remarkable odours in the course of our exploration, whistling and calling and listening to catch any faint bark, if James had been beguiled into any house, and kept there for the sake of his skin. All, however, was in vain, and we were returning rather downcast to report our loss to Peg, when who should meet us but Master James, prancing about and smiling, as if leading his friends a wild-goose chase was a form of sport that had never entered his head: it was impossible to chastise him much, as he might have thought it was for coming home when he had lost us, but we made him understand that he must stick to us another time.

Very soon after we had got away my neuralgia came on again, and I had to retire, leaving Willie and Joseph on watch. My neuralgia seems to have settled down on me for a regular ten-to-two sort of period every day. I have found that taking snuff relieves it to a great extent, but it is a considerable nuisance, as it absolutely incapacitates me from any of the innocent peaceful enjoyment of caravan-travelling while it lasts; though, of course, when there is anything disagreeable to do, such as getting the mares up

a hill or through any stones, I don't feel the pain while the other trouble lasts. To-day it lasted straight on end for the best part of the journey. The first part to Gijean was smooth and without stones, and we quite did one of our records, reaching Gijean—twelve kilometres—in an hour and ten minutes. Here we pulled up for lunch by the side of somebody's garden-wall. There was not a soul about in the street except one small child munching a bit of bread: James went for it, and it disappeared.

We left at 2.10 after a slight delay, owing to the Missus's caprices, who would insist on taking her place to be harnessed tail foremost, and when remonstrated with, began to be a little free with her hoofs. However, we at last got away. Gijean is a very long village, and took us some time to get clear of it; then we continued along, the road being mostly down-hill for once and a way, which put the mares in a very good temper. There was a succession of heathy hills to the right, and fields with the early crops just beginning to appear on the left. I began to feel much better now, so Willie and I got down and walked through Fabriques, and about two and a half kilometres farther. The road all along here was singularly destitute of traffic, the only vehicle we passed being a cart drawn by the smallest donkey in the world, with two extremely stout lovers squeezed into it, with their arms affectionately twined round each other's waists,—a disconsolate widow and widower we took them to be from their appearance.

Then we at last had a long hill up, which the mares, taking a nice-minded view of things, took quite willingly: the scenery now became more woody. Willie said that there was a great forest here, not so very long ago, in which one of Marryat's heroes—he can't exactly remember which,

and it has slipped my memory too, though I once knew all Marryat's books pretty well by heart—hid in when he escaped from Toulon. Then we had another hill up, and when we got to the top of that we had a good view of



Montpellier below us, with its fine cathedral spire in its midst, and its aqueduct stretching away on arches for an immense way into the distance. There was a tremendous hill down into the town, and it was all the mares could

do to keep the Escargot back; and we entered on the boulevards. There were a lot of people about, it being apparently market-day, but nobody could tell us of any place to put up at, and a good many of those we asked sniffed in a somewhat sententious manner, as if they didn't think we should ever get a place, so we set to work to search for ourselves.

We had a fearful hunt: we went half-way round the boulevards one way, and then turned back and went the other half round the other way, but all in vain; then we tried up some of the streets leading off the boulevards, which were very narrow, and in some cases we had to back out of them for thirty yards or so, as there was no possible means of turning round once we were in them, and we were still unsuccessful. One place was quite full; at another they wouldn't take us if we lived in the caravan; at another we couldn't get in because the door was too narrow, &c., &c.: but even if it hadn't been for these objections, nobody seemed to regret not being able to accommodate us. Montpellier is evidently an eminently respectable town, and doesn't hold out the arms of hospitality to caravan people.

At last a citizen told us of a place down the Lunel road, beyond the bridge, three kilometres off—the Green House; so we set off for that. It was a great deal more like five kilometres; and when we got there, there was nothing but a sort of turnpike house, whose inmate never had heard of the Green House, the only thing green there being evidently ourselves: so we returned to the town, feeling that our only hope was to go on gyrating round the boulevards till somebody took us in, if only to get rid of us. Peg suggested that the police might do it; but it was now past five, and getting

bitterly cold, and we were beginning to feel that even that would be better than nothing.

A carter we met on the road back recommended us to the Old Red Hat, where he said all sorts of *voyaux* put up, and he thought they would be likely to take us in; but even there they refused us: we haven't felt so small before on the whole of our voyage. They had the grace, however, to tell us of another place where carts from the country put up, round by the military hospital, so we went there, and at last found our much-longed-for shelter. The *patron* was not too agreeable, but just agreeable enough to say we might come in: it was a very tight fit in at the entrance-arch, and when we had passed through we found ourselves in a huge stable with the beasts all along each side of it, and carts and *commis voyageurs'* chaises drawn up in the space between: the whole place being only lighted and ventilated through the arch, so that when the door is shut it was pitch-dark except for artificial light, and all that there is of that consists of an oil-flare like one sees on a street market-stall, on one side of the door. Several of the other vehicles were moved a little on one side, and we had to navigate through the rest, as the *patron* insisted on our coming right to the farthest end of the stable. So here we were settled at 6.15, having made about forty-five kilometres of it altogether to-day, what with our peregrinations round the boulevards and the rest.

The Missus gave us another fright directly we took her out, by simulating an attack of colic; but we dosed her promptly, in which we were assisted by the *garçon* of the stable, who is more inclined to favour us than his *patron* seems to be. However, it proved to be a false alarm. We dined out this evening, as there is a certain want of freshness in the stable. Then we took a short walk round the town,

and saw the Hotel de Ville, the Opera House, and the triumphal arch to commemorate the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Willie has got a bed at the Hotel de l'Opera, in the centre of the town, and has gone off to bed.

It is a very curious sensation being in this stable: there is an old gentleman, proprietor of a movable stall, who has his bed under a sort of tilt on his barrow; but before going to sleep he is now eating his supper on his stall by the aid of one very guttering candle, of whelks and absinthe, a very few of the first to a great deal of the latter. The *garçon* has told us that he has a history: he came up to Montpellier twenty years ago with two sous, and now he hasn't even got that. I hope he won't set the stable on fire: there is lots of straw about, and he has a deal of absinthe inside him. I shall watch till I am sure all is quiet.



CHAPTER XIII.

MONTPELLIER—LUNEL—VAUVERT—ST GILLES—ARLES.

Thursday, Jun. 16.—We had a fairly good night on the whole, though there was a cock in our stables whom we found crowing when we came in last night, and was going on steadily when we went out for a walk at 11.30: he most likely thought that if it was going to be always dark like that, he had better make sure of beginning his crow in time by never leaving off at all. It was a very strange sensation waking up in that dark place, and recalled the experiences of youth, when one had to get up by candle-light at about 6.30 on a winter's morning and dress shiveringly to go in to early school: or later, those not quite

such uncomfortable ones, because one could command more creature comforts as accessories, of getting up in a London fog. As it was, if we hadn't had the alarm with us we might have gone on sleeping till now. We got up about 8.30 and had our breakfast by lamplight: Willie by agreement didn't turn up, but had his coffee at his hotel. Then we cleaned up a bit and went out for a walk. One advantage of the perpetual night has been that it seems to have, at any rate for the time being, effectually cheated the neuralgia, which didn't come on at its usual time this morning, probably because it didn't realise that the day could possibly have begun.

We went on to the Peyrou, a sort of terraced garden, considerably embellished in honour of Louis XIV., and then into the town to the market, where we bought some peas and new potatoes, the first we have had yet, and met Willie, who had only just got up, and then we came back to lunch. James didn't go out with us in the morning, as he too was puzzled by the lateness of the dawn, and was sleeping religiously on all through the morning, waiting for the laggard sun to rise. Some of the carts nearest the entrance had gone away, apparently including the one with the cock in it, for we heard his voice no more, and concluded that he had been driven away to his fate; but there were still sufficient carts left to block the Escargot in, and make it quite impossible for us to leave even if we had wanted to, anyhow without giving ourselves and everybody else a lot of trouble.

We found Joseph engaged in a hot dispute with the *patron*, who had roused Joseph's ire by giving his opinion that our mares were *méchantes*. I demanded the reason for the accusation, as I wished to do everything in my power

to put matters straight if they needed it; but the only one he seemed to be able to bring forward was that they were bigger than any of the other horses in the stable, and he seemed to have a sort of idea that all horses were naturally vicious all over, and of course the larger they were the more room they had for vice. I was trying to convince him of his mistake, when our friendly *garçon* of last night came up, and flatly told his *patron* he didn't know anything about it: so the *patron* eventually slunk away, and we have seen nothing of him since. Joseph tells us that the *patron* is a mere capitalist who finances the stable, while the *garçon* looks after it, and only lets the *patron* come in and display his ignorance about once a week.

After lunch we went out again to see the Cathedral; the principal feature of it is the porch, which is very fine. Then we went to the Musée, where they have what they call the original "Infant Samuel" of Sir Joshua Reynolds, which they are immensely proud of, and which the custodian, a very verbose old gentleman who had learnt off the catalogue by heart, and repeated it to us word for word—Peg checked him by the one we had bought, and pronounced him correct, except the paragraph on the last page about not giving gratuities to the attendants—seemed to look upon as almost an ample compensation for Waterloo. It is certainly genuine, but I always imagined we had the genuine original in the National Gallery; I suppose he painted one of them as a replica. I must inquire when I get home which is which.

After that we went to the Jardin des Plantes, and walked about amongst the tropical productions that flourish here as well as they do in their native lands—it is stupendously hot here—and then on to the Peyrou, where we

sat in the shade of the temple at the end of the aqueduct which runs in there, and listened to the band and watched the infant aristocracy of Montpellier trying to drown themselves sailing paper and other boats in the artificial ponds. Then we returned to the caravan. We found the old gentleman of yesterday got back from his business—whatever it may be—and preparing his evening meal over a candle end, again dangerously near the straw: talking to himself meanwhile, or as a variation to his dog and mule, to whom, as far as we could make out, he was trying to explain away his slight excesses in the way of absinthe last night, on the ground that he didn't as a rule take it, but did so on this occasion to stave off the influenza.

We dined early at the same *café* this evening, and then went to see "Manon" at the opera. The music was pretty, but we none of us could make out the plot, and the French programme, which as usual was part of the advertisement sheet of one of the local papers, gave us very little help: we must go and see it in England some day, where there will be more facilities for understanding it. One thing particularly puzzled us, and that was that it was described as a "comic opera"; whereas, if there was one thing that was evident about it, it was that everybody, as far as we saw, came to the most hopeless grief. But then they call "Carmen" a comic opera too: there must be a subtle sense of humour about these French people that we duller English cannot understand. The theatre is fairly large, and very prettily decorated with electric light, and oil-lamps in reserve in case of anything going wrong with the electricity. But why, oh why, are French scene-shifters so slow about changing the scenes? We timed the acts and the intervals: the longest of the acts took forty minutes,

and the shortest of the intervals thirty-five minutes. As it was, they hadn't begun the last act at 11.35; so as we had made up our minds that nothing short of a miracle could relieve the general gloom of the hero's and heroine's surroundings, and we were not very deeply interested in them, as they were two of the ugliest specimens of humanity that we had ever seen, and our chief cause of wonderment about them was all along that they could ever love each other, and we are meaning to start early to-morrow, we left the *dénouement* to take care of itself and came home.

We found ourselves locked out, and had some difficulty getting in, as first we had to wake up the *garçon*, who was a very sound sleeper, and then we missed the key which he threw down to us from his window over the arch, and it was not till I had used my last match that we stumbled upon it in the gutter. The faithful Joseph was asleep in the caravan, where he had been waiting for us all the evening, as I had gone out with the keys in my pocket, and he couldn't lock the door. However, he had provided himself with a box of sardines and forty centimes worth of walnuts, off which he had dined, and we have reason to believe that he enjoyed this scratch sort of dinner better than our ordinary and more English ones.

Friday, Jan. 17.—It is just a month to-day since we left Bordeaux. We were up at six this morning. It was rather foggy this morning even in the stables. Most of the surrounding carts had gone out, but there were several others coming in in their place, mostly of the donkey order, drawn by the diminutive donkey of this part of the country, and we were anxious to get out before we were too tightly closed in again; so as soon as we were dressed we edged as near as

possible to the door, working the Escargot by hand, and then waited for Willie.

Willie turned up at a quarter past nine, and we immediately got the mares in, and were clear of the stable-door at twenty-five minutes past. We nearly got jammed diagonally in the sort of tunnel under the arch going out, as we hadn't been able to get quite straight at it to start with, and there was only just room for the axle-boxes in the best of positions: and the Escargot had not the advantage of the native carts in such emergencies, which, being built like long ladders sticking out at an immense distance both fore and aft of their single pair of wheels, when they stick can generally be heaved out of their difficulties by the driver putting his weight on the hinder end, and lifting the donkey or the mule at the forward end round into the right direction. However, with some judicious backing, and manœuvring the fore carriage, and, particularly, everybody working together and doing the right thing at the right moment, we got clear. Then we went back along the boulevards to the same road where we went on our vain quest on the night before last, and so were on our way again.

It was very cold outside Montpellier: the town seems to run its own heating-apparatus, and not to diffuse the warmth inside it about the country round to any extent. There was, too, a bit of a fog still, but the country didn't look very interesting as far as we could see, so we don't think we lost very much. The road was good and flat, so we rattled along at a good pace through Castelnau and Vendargues and Colombier, at which latter place we caught sight of a bull being trained for some of the bull-fights which are the great amusement of this district, executing somersaults and other acrobatic feats in a side street, with the greater part of the

population looking on from points of vantage, such as trees, windows, and the tops of walls. Here the sun came out, and we had it fairly fine for the rest of the day.

We had already done fifteen kilometres, and Joseph wanted to stop, but we encouraged him with hopes of a village a little farther along, and went on through Valergues and Lunel Viel, neither of which places offered any very great attractions as a halting-place ; and we were determined to get to Lunel for lunch, as the map shows us some rather severe work to come, and it is best to take as much advantage of a good stretch of road when we have got it as possible. We had to wait some time at a level-crossing for one of the longest luggage-trains I have ever seen to go by, seventy-five heavily loaded trucks, with only one engine, so it may be supposed that it didn't go very fast ; but in spite of the delay we made Lunel at 11.55, twenty-three kilometres in two hours and a half, and the mares none the worse for it, as Joseph was rather trying to make out, but seemingly the better.

Lunel is a quiet little garrison town, with a branch of the Canal du Midi running up to it with a dock at the end. We put up in the courtyard of the Hotel du Palais, off the principal square. After we had had lunch we went out for a stroll to see the principal objects of interest : there was an immense crucifix in the middle of the square, and a clock erected in commemoration of the founding of the first Republic, and a fine statue of Liberty in another smaller square. We went down to the dock, where there was not much going on, but a lot of dock hands sitting on the wall waiting for something to turn up, and eating their dinners meanwhile, in which James materially assisted them, making himself as much at home with them as if he had been used to dining

with them all his life. They all seemed to take a great fancy to him, though they were very doubtful as to his breed, and even consulted us on the subject; but we couldn't help them much, as we didn't know the French for collie, and they quite refused to believe that he was a mere sheep-dog: they said he was much too beautiful for that, so we left them still doubting. There were a lot of *savonnuses* down by the canal sitting in their tubs and washing their clothes in the water outside, which struck us as rather a remarkable mode of proceeding.

We found a public garden, where we strolled about till a custodian came up and objected to James running on the borders and picking the flowers, which he naturally was doing, because we had particularly warned him not to; so we left, and after looking in at a great palisaded bull-fight place with seats round it, and a passage staked off between the seats and the central arena, we went back. Joseph did not want to go on: he has been rather on the strike all day—I think a faint attempt at a kick over the traces, and to try which of us is master—but as it was obvious that the mares have never been in better condition, and there could be no other valid reason for our remaining at Lunel, we turned a deaf ear to his arguments, and set forth again at 2.30.

We travelled along about five kilometres, then crossed a small river and the frontier into Gard, then turned sharp to the right, and, for the first time on the journey, left the Route Nationale for the Route Departementale. The Route Departementale, as far as our experience has gone yet, is as a rule good but very narrow: the worst of it is, that it is constantly branching off into ways which degenerate into the merest cart-tracks, which are the lowest step in the social scale of roads, and there being no sign-posts nor kilometre-

stones to guide one, one has to look out pretty sharp, or one finds one's self straying off down one of these tracks, and finally bringing up short in a deep rut. We did this twice, and then found it best for Willie and me to take turns of walking about a hundred yards ahead of the Escargot, so as to signal back in time of need to stop her from coming on too far in the wrong direction; and so we went on cautiously but safely through Aimargues, the country being very ugly, mostly pasturage, penned off into sheepfolds with lots of young lambs about, till a little before five we came to Vauvert, thirty-eight kilometres, on the spur of a new set of hills, through which we shall have to make our way to-morrow.

We pulled right uphill through the village over some very stiff stones; but when we got to the other end we were told there was no inn there, so we had to make our way back again to the Hotel du Commerce et du Cheval Blanc, which we had noticed on our first arrival, but had not stopped at, as we thought it best to get over the stones to-night if possible. The *patron* was a Spaniard—most of the Vauvertois are, being frequently fugitive Carlists, so we learnt—and received us most hospitably, offering us the choice of the whole village for our moorings, which it seemed he had full right to do, as he was the *maire* himself. We eventually anchored ourselves just opposite the hotel, on a little plot of grass where the two streets of the village branched off from each other at the entrance.

Our host made every use of his authority in our behalf, getting us a very nice-looking piece of lamb as a private favour to himself from the principal farmer of the place, and the only eggs and lemons that there were to be procured in the whole of the district, telling us with some glee that we wouldn't have got these last if it hadn't been for his superior

astuteness, in telling the lady to whom they had belonged that he wanted them for some invalid friends. We asked him to dinner, but either his religious scruples or a slight shyness about trusting himself entirely to the interior of a travelling caravan prevented him from accepting our invitation.

We had a most exciting match between the different items that we had for dinner, and Willie wanted to bet on them; lamb, potatoes, peas, and apple-tart all started, and all came in very close to each other, the lamb coming in first, then the tart, and then the potatoes, the peas last. And so we sat down to a dinner fit for a prince, only it was rather spoilt by the durability of the lamb, which was of the gutta-percha variety, so much so that Peg bent her fork over it right backwards. After dinner we had a good spring cleaning. Willie attracted quite a little crowd of children round in the course of his cleaning the pasteboard outside on the steps, the impression created by his banging the board with the rolling-pin being that he was beating a new kind of drum to attract attention to our performance. Joseph has made a most diffuse apology for his fit of sulks to-day: he says he has not felt well, but he won't take anything till he has got worse.

Saturday, Jan. 18.—To-day broke dull and foggy. We passed a good night, got Willie out of bed about eight, and after making *renseignements* from our kind host of the hotel and several of his friends, all of whom varied sufficiently from the others in their opinion to make their advice a little embarrassing, finally left at 9.25 to take the road to Nîmes to start with, and so, by working a long way round, rejoin the road to Arles, which at its outset from the village was very bad and sandy: every one agreed on that at any

rate. What the Arles road must have been like I can't imagine, as the one we had chosen was about as bad as they make them: for the first three kilometres we had stones, and then deep sandy ruts, with some very steep inclines every now and then to pull up; and we almost began to regret not having stuck to the map, as, anyhow, the other road was about five kilometres shorter, and it couldn't have been much worse than this.

We crossed the Gard and turned to the right through Beauvoisin and Generac: there seemed to have been some *commis voyageurs* down in these parts lately who had been doing a large business in Eiffel Tower *berris*, for not a child whom we passed on the road—masculine, feminine, or doubtful—but had on a *berri*, with the lively presentment of that modern hideosity worked in red wool on the crown. Through these villages, a long way before the first, all the way between them, and a long way after the last, was one steady pull up: at Generac we had a very tight fit through the narrow streets, the radius of whose windings was barely large enough in places to take the length of the Escargot in; and we also nearly came to grief in the main drain of the village, which was a deep ditch right across the road, and when we had got our fore wheels down into it, it required a tremendous lift on the part of the mares to get them out again: indeed, if the pole hadn't been of extra good quality, I doubt if the strain on it wouldn't have snapped it; as it was, it bent like a first-class Damascus blade.

At last we got to the top of the incline, and there stopped to blow a bit. We had the side of the hill above us on our right, but to the left it sloped away towards the valley below, where we could see Nimes in the distance, with the sun, which had just struggled out, shining on its spires and white

houses: clumps of timber were dotted about the country, and there were a good many reedy places about, giving evidence of the sandy soil, of which there is a great prevalence about here. We had a good bit of flat, and then began to go down again till we reached the plain below, all sand; probably the Rhone area covered the whole of it, and this plain was only formed out of the alluvial deposit that the river was constantly bringing down. We reached St Gilles, a straggly sort of town on a bit of a hill, on the top of which the cathedral is built, at 12.30, and pulled up in front of the stable of the Hotel du Cheval Blanc for lunch.

After we had lunched we went to see the Cathedral, passing through narrow streets, which didn't seem to have altered much since the old days of the frightful struggles between the Albigenses and the Inquisition, of which St Gilles was one of the great centres. The Cathedral is quite one of the most interesting we have seen yet: the porch is Byzantine, and there are lions at the top, where the old bishops and the feudal lords used to sit in judgment on their vassals; and some most peculiar sculptures of the Fall and the Last Judgment, grotesque enough to give one the nightmare. The architecture inside is Norman; but the pillars are only half there, having, I believe, been cut in half and used out of the ruins of the old choir, which lies at the back. All this is, so to speak, on the first storey; on the ground-floor there is another church, down into which one goes as a sort of crypt, and this was the scene of the massacres of the Roman Catholics by the Albigenses, who slew some hundreds of them and threw them down a well, which is still shown, and is known as the Martyrs' Well: though I haven't a doubt that if these martyrs had been the stronger they would have put the Albigenses down the

well. There was no mistake about the earnestness of the religion of those times.

At the back of the Cathedral, as it now exists, are the ruins of the old choir, but nothing remains but the bases of the pillars and the old bell-tower, which, I believe, is still used, but must have always stood quite apart from the rest of the building, like the *campanile* of an Italian cathedral. Then we went to see the old vicarage opposite the west door of the cathedral: it is still used as a priest's house; there were some very fine carved mantelpieces there, and the housekeeper who showed us over pointed out to us where there had been a secret storey built half-way up the rooms of the ground-floor, in which a large body of Royalists had lived during the Revolution. There were evident signs of royalism about still, for the rooms were all decorated with pictures of the Orleans family.

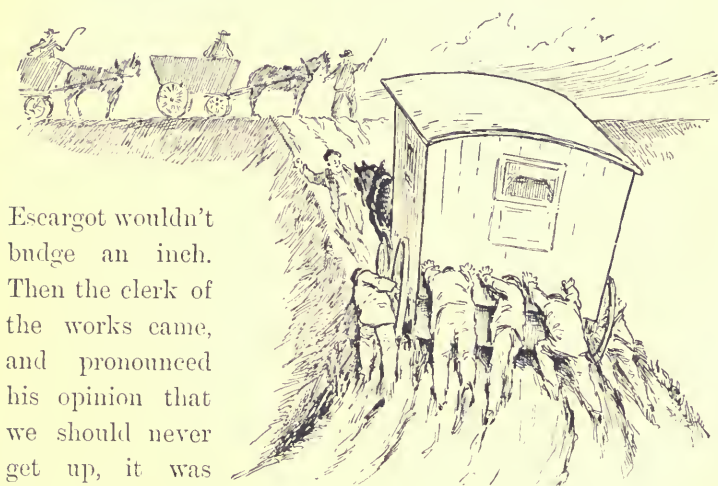
We left St Gilles at 2.45, the weather having become quite clear and beautiful again. The road had been reported at St Gilles as beautiful all the way to Arles, except a little bit about a hundred metres long, just by the new bridge that was being built over the Petit Rhone, a couple of kilometres or so from St Gilles. Of course we made light in our hearts of this trifle, and set off cheerfully, expecting a comparatively clear run for the rest of our journey. But our troubles began at the Petit Rhone: the old bridge was just a bridge of boats, and the tide being out, there was a nasty, steep, slippery-looking wooden incline down on to it, which, combined with the noise their own hoofs made on the wood, frightened the mares, and we had some trouble getting them to go down on to it. However, we put the shoe on, and coaxed them down and across to the other side, thus crossing into Bouches de Rhone.

There we had a corresponding incline up off the bridge, but which the mares took fairly well, as by this time they were getting more used to the clatter, and then came the short bit of bad road, and it *was* a bad bit, indeed. The proper road had apparently been diverted to go over the new suspension-bridge, which was being erected just below the bridge of boats: why they need have changed the road so early in the proceedings I failed to see, as there were only the piers of the new bridge put up yet, and the rest of it couldn't be finished for some time to come; but, anyhow, it was so, and in the meanwhile a sort of rough embankment of military gabions, with earth thrown loosely over them, led down from the diverted road to the old bridge, over which the whole of the traffic had to pass, and had been evidently passing for some weeks, or even months, as the so-called road was cut up like a ploughed field into great furrows, a foot or eighteen inches deep, with the tops of the gabions sticking up between them.

Our chances of getting up safely seemed very small, as it was naturally only to be expected that our weight would sink us even deeper into the mess, and also the embankment being very narrow, it would require very nice steering to prevent our wheels slipping over the edge, not to speak of our having to make two entirely new ruts for ourselves outside all the other ruts, and so not getting the benefit of the certain amount of beaten down firmer earth that there would be at the bottom of the old ones. However, there was no good looking at it. We got ourselves straight at the foot of the slope, and called on the mares—Joseph at the reins, and Willie and I at the mares' heads—and they responded pluckily, pulling with all their might, though, poor beasts, they had very loose foothold on the soft earth; but all they could do

only carried us up about fifteen yards, and then we could get no farther, but stuck fast, the Escargot gradually sinking into the ground where she stood.

Some of the navvies engaged on the bridge came to our help, and put their shoulders to the wheels, and wherever else there was room for them, and we all shoved, and the mares pulled till their feet slipped from under them, and they nearly fell down, but all was of no avail—the



Escargot wouldn't budge an inch. Then the clerk of the works came, and pronounced his opinion that we should never get up, it was quite unreason-

able. we had no *mécanique*, nor anything to help ourselves up with; but I pointed out to him that we did happen to have a very good *mécanique*, though what use that would have been to go up a hill I failed to see, unless, as I have often suspected from seeing the huge brakes that French wheeled carts have at the back of their wheels, the Frenchman has an idea that by putting it on he materially aids his horse or other beast by shoving the cart uphill. However, the clerk of the works was still of opinion that we should

never succeed in getting up, and recommended us to turn back and go to Arles round by Bellegarde, which he informed us was only thirty kilometres, as against fifteen which we would have to go this way : but it appeared very doubtful if we could move backward now any better than forward, and besides, the crowd having by this time made out that we were English, it behoved us for the honour of our nation not to give in, and slink back allowing that we were beaten.

Just then the old woman who kept the toll-gate of the bridge of boats beckoned us aside, and gave us her advice, which was not to attempt to move from where we were, especially not backwards. The bridge was opened just then to let a steamer through, but she pointed out a row of carts waiting at the top of the embankment for us to move, that they might pass down the embankment, and over the bridge when it was closed again. We had the key of the position, she represented, and if we only stuck to it long enough, some of the carters, out of very necessity, would have to take their horses out, and lend them to us in order to clear the way for themselves. The advice was good, so we waited till the bridge was closed again. Then appeared manifest signs of impatience on the part of the carters. One or two of the lighter carts dared the passage as far as where we were standing, then tipped down the side of the embankment, and got safely down to the bridge, though at great risk to their own equilibrium ; but the larger carts didn't dare follow their example. Some of them came down, and indulged in some rather remarkable language, but the old lady only winked at me, and we sat tight, so to speak, only suggesting occasionally that if they would lend us a *renfort* we should be only too proud to give way to them ; but they looked at

the Escargot and at their horses, which for the most part were very miserable specimens, and said that it would be no use trying, as it would only strain their beasts, and couldn't possibly be any use to us.

At last, however, a more pleasant carter than the rest, the last who had arrived on the scene, came forward, and rebuked the others for their want of charity to benighted strangers, and said he would willingly let us have his horses, but unfortunately he had no traces that would suit; but here the old lady again came in, and, by a sort of conjuring trick, produced a pair of rope traces from somewhere about her person, with rings at the ends to hook on to the end of our pole. Our friendly carter lost no time in taking his horses out, fitting the traces to them, and attaching them to our pole: the navvies dropped into their places again round the wheels and the body; we all gave one vast heave, and the Escargot ploughed through the rest of the slough of despond, and emerged on to the hard road at the top, scattering the carts which were waiting there to the right and left, with the accumulated impetus which had been bottled up while coming over the heavy ground. The navvies gave a small cheer, and the carters, laying aside all their former animosity, which we had to admit was not altogether unreasonable, came and complimented us, not on our firmness, which I am afraid they still looked upon rather in the light of obstinacy, but on the magnificent staying powers of our mares. Then we tried to recompense the carter and the navvies; but they with one accord refused to take even the smallest token of our gratitude: the latter on the ground that they liked a little variety in their work, and the former because he said it was only what every driver ought to do for every other driver, and he was sure from our look that we would have done the

same for him; so we had to content ourselves with calling out our heartfelt thanks after him, as he drove away smiling.

We were now on the Ile de Camargues, where they breed all the best bulls for the bull-fights in the south of France: it is all one vast alluvial plain, mostly pasturage, and very uninteresting; but the roads were very good and flat, and we soon came in sight of Arles. We passed through the Trinquetaille Faubourg and over the Rhone by a girder bridge, and then through a corner of the town out on to the boulevards. We found a stable half-way up an incline off the boulevards, kept by an amiable and wonderfully handsome woman, though she was a little spoilt by having lost one of her front teeth, which showed when she smiled; and there we put the mares to bed, anchoring the Escargot, after much backing and manœuvring, outside the stables on the incline, a little down in the bows, but not uncomfortably so, with stones under the wheels to prevent her taking charge and running away down the hill. We were settled in our night quarters at about 5.45. We have come thirty-five kilometres to-day.

Peg and Willie went out shopping, and to find a hotel for Willie before dinner, and on their return reported the streets very narrow and dark. James and I looked after the mutton, which was cooking meanwhile. James has been fairly well behaved the last few days; he runs such a lot now backwards and forwards in front of the Escargot, that he is mostly too tired to turn his idle hands to mischief when he stops. After dinner we played whist, with an old envelope for the five of diamonds, which has somehow been lost,—there is some slight reason to suppose that James ate it at Narbonne by mistake for a wafer,—till eleven, and now Willie has gone off to bed, and we are just going to turn in too.



CHAPTER XIV.

ARLES—SALON—ROGNAC—L'ASSASSIN—MARSEILLES.

Sunday, Jan. 19.—To-day has been very hot. We were all up very late—in fact, so late that we found it more advisable, as well as of course more economical, to run our breakfast and lunch into one. After the combined meal, we went out to see the sights of Arles.

First we went to the Cathedral of St Trophimus, a very fine one, in the same sort of style all over as the porch at St Gilles; it has been recently restored: and then we went on to the Hotel de Ville to look for the Venus of Arles, but we only found a cast of her; I believe, if I remember now aright,

that I have seen the original at the Louvre. Then we went to the Place des Hommes, which was once the old Forum, some of the remains of which are built into the houses round. There was a hiring-fair going on, which we stopped and looked at for some time. There were only men there to-day; but they looked very picturesque in their large flappy hats, and their bright-coloured shawls wrapped round them like shepherds' plaids, and the bright colours of their waistcoats: a handsome set of men too.

After that we went on to the Amphitheatre. It has seen a good deal of history in its time besides its original purposes, having been used as a fortress both by and against the Saracens, who built four look-out towers on the top of it; but it is in a splendid state of preservation, and though it has been to a certain extent restored recently, it has been done in excellent taste. We walked all round outside, and then went inside and explored all over it: sat in the patricians' seats, and went down to the wild beasts' dens and the vaults where they kept the early Christians before they were brought out to suffer in the arena: as the *gardien* who started us round remarked, there is an odour of Christians *partout* at Arles, but especially in this arena. We sat for some time in the proconsul's private box, and thought over the manifold scenes of bloodshed and religious heroism that must have taken place there under the old Romans. Now the arena is used for the *Courses de Taureau* at Easter and other festivals, which all the young men of the district compete in: they are not exactly bull-fights, but more of the nature of bull-baiting, the object being to place a wreath on the infuriated animal's horns without getting hurt one's self, a process involving considerable agility. We climbed up one of the towers and had a grand view of the country round,

with Mont Majeur in the distance, where the Saracens were finally beaten out of this part of the country. We were very nearly shut up at the top of that tower for good, for there was only a narrow hole to get out on to the roof by, and a very fat Frenchman got stuck in it, and it was only by dint of Willie and me pushing at his head, while his friend pulled at his legs below, that we managed to get him loose, which was done with a sort of pop like the drawing of a very tight champagne cork.

Then we went on to the Theatre, which is also in a very good state of preservation. It was fearfully hot there, so we sat down in the box of Flavius Maximus and watched the gambols of an infant orphanage out for its afternoon walk, who were occupying the stage. They were a wonderfully pretty set of girls, and some of them knew it: it was quite amusing watching them surreptitiously putting themselves straight when they thought their hair or their clothes had been disarranged in their play. I must say that the people here, men, women, and children, but especially the women, are quite the handsomest set of people I have ever seen all in a lump; even the old women are not faded into ugliness like most of the Southern women. They have a very picturesque way of doing their hair, which is always as black as ink, by puffing it out on each side of the head and tying the end back in a straight towering knot at the back, as one sees in a great many Greek statues: I suppose they are really Greeks by descent, and probably this fashion has been handed down from time immemorial. Then their dresses are bright and so gracefully put on; they even excel among Frenchwomen in that way, and that is saying about as much as can possibly be said.

We went on from the Theatre to the Musée, where there

were a lot of Roman antiquities, great coffers chiefly, that might have been baths or tombs, more probably the latter; and then on to the old early Christian cemetery, where the old stone coffins were ranged along on the ground with their tops off, looking like so many sheep-troughs: we wondered what had become of the early Christians. Then we took a walk along the outside of the old Roman wall, a tremendous bit of masonry all massed together like one huge bit of concrete, seemingly very little the worse for all the centuries it has stood, and likely to stand for an equal number of centuries more, long after the rest of Arles has been forgotten. There was no jerry-building in those good old days.

We came back through the little fair on the boulevards to the Escargot. One show that particularly took our fancy was run by an old gentleman who had painted a most vivid panorama of some celebrated murder that had more or less recently taken place in France, "by permission of the police," portraying the whole progress of the murderer from his cradle to the guillotine. A highly edifying and moral panorama, he was announcing to his audience. The pictures were most ghastly—the 'London Police News' wasn't in it—but it struck us from the casual view we took of it that they would have done for any other murder, and not improbably had. However, he seemed to be doing a very fair business, his audience being not hypercritical, and, it is to be presumed, desirous of improving their own and their children's minds in the way that he suggested, for there were a lot of grown-up people with their children round them.

We found that during our absence Joseph had moved the Escargot from its slantindicular position of last night down to the boulevards below, where we are certainly more comfortable, as we haven't to climb uphill to get to the back part,

as we had to do in the old position. Joseph has been spending the afternoon in beautifying the mares and the Escargot, and himself by having his hair cut, and it is difficult to say which looks the most spruce. We had dinner, and have been reading the 'Arles Howler' all the evening on the iniquities of our nation as against the poor harmless Portuguese, who have been presuming on their weakness to take all sorts of liberties with our rights in Africa. We have learnt that we are cowardly, thieving, unjust, oppressors of the helpless, and pretty nearly everything else bad that can be imagined. However, I don't suppose Lord Salisbury reads the 'Arles Howler' as a rule. The 'Petit Journal' is principally occupied with a man who has travelled from Vienna to Paris in a packing-case.

Monday, Jan. 20.—To-day has been very fine and bright again. We got our party together at a reasonably early hour, and left Arles at 9.20. We went out along the boulevards past the Roman walls, then downhill for the next quarter of an hour or so, with the Roman aqueduct to our right, till we crossed the canal, and got on to a perfectly flat plain again. James here behaved foolishly again, and thinking that it was time to pay out the wheels for the harm they have done him, set to work to bite them again, with the almost inevitable result that he got his other fore-paw run over, and had to be picked up and lifted into his old corner at the back by the bed, where he has been lying groaning and licking the injured foot all day.

We had an absolutely flat road before us now, and for the most part, as far as we could judge from the map, no place to stop at, St Raphael and St Martin, which we passed in the first hour and a half of our journey, being of course much too short a stage for the first half of it, which of course we always

like making the longest half, if possible. However, we passed one or two diligences evidently coming from somewhere, so we went on in hopes, and so entered on the Plain de la Cran, a wide extent of country bearing nothing but large stones and very short grass, on which there were large numbers of sheep browsing more or less at large, stretching far away to the horizon on the right, and terminated in the left distance by the Chaîne des Alpines, which culminated far away ahead of us in the sombre-looking peak of the Mont de Défends. This plain has a legend attached to it that it was where Hercules fought the Ligurians, and the stones lying all about are those that his father Zeus sent down from heaven when he asked him for help to throw at his enemies. I must say I have always thought that the labours of Hercules were rather overrated feats, like those of a great many of the old god-born heroes, as there was generally a tendency on their part when they were getting the worst of a dispute to "tell father" or "mother," as the case might be, like little boys in the London streets.

We went on and on, and the road resolved itself into a perfectly straight line, reaching as far as we could see into the distance ahead of us, with cypresses on each side, but no sign of a village; but at last we came to a place where there were symptoms of rather better cultivation of the plain behind the cypresses on the right, and through a break between them on the left, standing back about fifty yards from the road, there was an *auberge*, a sort of half-way house, with no one about, but with the welcome announcement hung outside that there was to be found accommodation for man and beast. We pulled up at 12.15 by a little stream of running water that ran down by the side of the road, and as much in the shade of the cypresses as possible, though that

was not much, as the sun was nearly straight overhead, and took the mares out. The Missus was no sooner free than she started off straight to the stable with the greatest alacrity; she has a great idea of when she has done enough. There we stopped for nearly two hours, eating our frugal lunch, and enjoying the absolute peacefulness of the scene; a pleasant breeze sprang up behind us while we were stopping, and made an agreeable rustling in the cypresses, and the stream gently murmured as it rippled past; there were no signs of life whatever except the bleating of some sheep who had been turned out with their lambs in a better bit of pasturage just the other side of the cypresses; the afternoon was perfectly lovely, and the whole surroundings impressed one with an almost overpowering desire to go to sleep *à la* lotus-eater, and remain there the rest of one's days.

But all things must have an end, and at last the time came to put the mares to again, and proceed on our way. Joseph and I fetched them out of the stable—Joseph said there were people in the house, and took the money for the stabling, 40 centimes, in to them, but not a soul did we others see—and then we continued along the same straight road, without an incline either way on it that could be detected, without, perhaps, the aid of a spirit-level, the breeze behind us having considerably increased by this time, and, as it seemed to us, materially aiding us along.

We went along at a good pace, doing the next eight kilometres in forty minutes. Then we crossed the canal, and left the distinct characteristics of the plain behind, and the cypresses; before us the Chaîne d'Eguilles was rising into view, with Salon lying on the slopes at its foot. Now the stones began again, but they were not so difficult of passing as usual, for the simple reason that the good people of the

neighbourhood had diligently removed them from one side of the road as soon as they had been put down, so that we had a clear though somewhat rough passage to travel on. We passed the Salon cemetery to the left, and the race-course, in contradistinction to it, on the right, and then entered the town itself at four, having done forty-two kilometres to-day.

Salon is a large town on undulating ground, very clean-looking and very busy, with good shops. We followed the boulevards very nearly to the exit of the Marseilles road, at the other end of the town, and halted in front of the Café du Nord, close by the town-pump. A civil *patron* and an equally civil *garçon* came out and wanted to take the whole trouble of unharnessing the mares and taking them in on themselves, but, of course, we declined so much kindness; however, as they seemed so anxious, we let them do most of the work, only looking on to see that it was satisfactorily done. Then Willie and I went to find a hotel, which we had some difficulty in doing, as the people didn't seem to like our appearance; perhaps it was because I went with Willie, and I hadn't changed out of my travelling clothes into my walking-about ones: accordingly, at seemingly the last place left in the town that we hadn't yet tried, I kept round the corner while Willie went to make his arrangements by himself, and there he was successful.

All the principal buildings and inns are on the boulevards, with fine old gates leading off them to the older town inside, but I don't think much goes on inside, as the streets are so narrow: the inhabitants probably retire there to sleep, and come out like rabbits from a warren to get their living. We found a handsome fountain and a statue of Craponne, who was born at Salon. We bought some chestnuts off a stall on the boulevards, and a small boy made a most unprovoked

attempt on Willie's life with a toy pistol, and then we returned to dinner, which Peg had stayed at home to pay especial attention to, as we were going to have a real English plum-pudding. Joseph had been pumping meanwhile, and a passer-by had called in to ask if he was winding up the machinery of the marionettes. Joseph has his suspicions, as he usually has, of the over-friendly natives, and has again been sitting in the stable to make sure that the mares got all their oats.

The plum-pudding proved a great success. Since dinner we have been engaged in digesting it and reading the 'Marseilles Thunderer,' still on the iniquities of us brutal English. There has been a fearful row at a *café* over the way, and a man was forcibly ejected through a plate-glass window; but for a wonder no police appeared from unexpected quarters, and the disputants were left to fight it out by themselves. It has apparently all ended fairly amicably. Salon is a fearfully late place to go to bed: there are only 6895 inhabitants, the guide-book says, and I am sure, from the noise that is still going on (11.15), that the whole of these are on the boulevards.

Tuesday, Jan. 21.—There was a good deal of rain, but it has been a beautiful day. The Salon people were all up and about very early, if, indeed, as we are rather inclined to doubt, from the continuous noise throughout the night, they had ever been to bed. We left at 9.20. The *garçon* turned out to see us off and gave us a regular military salute, standing at the present with his stable-broom in front of the pump, which Joseph told us was because he had just served his time in the army, and Joseph had told him that Willie was an officer in the Queen of England's service.

We were still going along the Route Départementale, as we

have been making a short cut across to Marseilles instead of going round by Nîmes, which would have taken us at least two days longer. James still professes to be bad, though we can't help suspecting that he is again rather trading on his injury a little more than he need. We had a pretty level bit of running for the first half-hour, and then struck into the spurs of the Chaîne d'Eguilles, our first experience of them being a long pull uphill of four kilometres, past Lancon, an old walled village on the left, and through some very fine cuttings in the granite rocks, varied by embankments sloping down to the barren heath country in the valleys between the different elevations. Then we went down a bit, and then up another long hill, this time with olive-yards on both sides, and into a wild heathy and rocky sort of pass, like the scenes at the play where the brigands come down to perpetrate their wicked doings. This hill was also quite four kilometres long, but the mares took both quite unflinchingly, and without even a suggestion of wanting a *renfort*.

We took a bit of a blow at the top, meeting a nice fresh breeze almost in our faces, and then descended the whole four kilometres again, coming out from the pass on to a winding bit of road along the side of the hill, with a flat plain below us to the right, with great lumps of rock sticking up in it here and there, and the Étang de Berre in the distance. We were going down at a fair pace, Joseph, who was driving, having the greatest objection to put the brake on; he seems to look upon it as a kind of slur on his driving powers, and requires constant looking after to prevent him taking it off surreptitiously; but a man on a bicycle whirled past us at about six times our rate, and was out of sight almost before we realised from hearing his bell behind us that he was coming: whether he got to the bottom safe we don't know,

but we trust so, as we didn't subsequently come on any remains.

We left La Fare to our left, then crossed a stream, passing several carts, from whose drivers we made inquiries as to the distance to Marseilles, where we were trying to get to to-night, but as usual only received conflicting replies, varying from twenty-eight kilometres to forty: then began to go up again, again through cuttings and along embankments, with plenty of gorse dotted about in the wild rocky scenery through which we passed. Willie and I walked up this hill. A cart, with a mule, a donkey, and a horse, coming down the hill passed us, loaded with barrels, and our hearts went out towards it with thoughts of home, for those barrels were all marked as full of the best Glenlivet! Then we went down again along a very winding road, with olive-yards to our left and the heath to our right, and the Etang de Berre still nearer at the bottom: then followed a little stretch of level road under an avenue of young trees, and so we arrived at Rognac at 12.30, twenty-two kilometres in three hours ten minutes, which, considering the ups and downs, was very fair travelling.

Rognac lies on a little road of its own off the Route Departementale, so we had to turn aside to find a place to put up at: we found an *auberge*, with an old man sitting in an arm-chair in front of the door, who told us we could put up our mares there, but we must do it ourselves, as he was paralysed in his legs, and all the rest of his people had gone off to the fields. Indeed, every one in the village seemed to be gone to the fields too, or somewhere, for the whole time we stopped there we only saw one little girl with a cat in a basket, and an old woman, who came and asked us if we sold cures for rheumatism. Peg gave her a little of our home-

made embrocation, with directions that she was on no account to drink it, and not to tell anybody else, as we didn't know but what some of the inhabitants might be only lying low in their houses, and if they heard there were gratuitous remedies going about, we might have been mobbed. After all, I don't suppose it is so very odd that one sees so few people about in the villages, for if one passes through an average English village on a working day, one doesn't meet many people.

We left Rognac a little after two, returned to the main road, and continued for a little along a very sandy bit by the Etang de Berre, then crossed the railway, and enjoyed a twenty-five minutes' pull uphill, and along a sort of Corniche road through the Chaîne de Vitrolles, passing an old castle on the cliff above us. Then we went down again to Griffon, which consisted entirely, as far as we could see, of an *auberge* at a place where four ways met; and presently came to the Pas de Lonçieres, with a stiff ascent up. While we were preparing to tackle this, an old man passed us in a little pony-cart, and just as he came to us fired a gun off into the air: whether it was to show us that he was armed, and that there was no use therefore our trying any of our caravan nonsense on him, or whether it was only a custom of the inhabitants of this part of the country to make their horses go uphill, we are still ignorant: anyhow, in this case it had the latter effect, for the little pony raced off up the hill as hard as it could tear, and very much as if it had the bit between its teeth, and they were lost to sight round the next corner in a moment.

It took us another five-and-twenty minutes to get up that hill: the stones were fortunately only standing at the side of the road, but it hadn't got over the rain of last night, and was dreadfully sticky. However, with much trouble and

vexation of spirit, we arrived at the top, and there was Les Pennes perched up on the cliff above us in a most picturesque, and probably in former times a most desirable position, when people were not at home to each other so much as they are now, and it wasn't considered rude to roll down stones on unwelcome visitors. We went through a tunnel and through the lower half of the village, which lay on that side of the mountain, and on about another kilometre to L'Assassin, a very small hamlet, consisting of a hotel on one side of a place where three ways met, and a Gendarmerie, with its married quarters attached to it, opposite—nothing more: a benighted-looking place, and seemingly very fitly named. And then there was another severe hill in front of us, so, as we had already made thirty-five kilometres, we thought it best to stop for the night. Time 4.15.

The proprietor, a big fat man in his shirt-sleeves, and a pair of blue stuff continuations, was standing at his door with his hands in the pockets of the latter, staring at us, to see what we intended to do; but after we had been struggling for some minutes in the mud, which is particularly thick about here, and making no progress in our endeavours to get the Escargot into the sort of three-sided court standing back from the road which constituted his premises, he suddenly proved most obliging in his efforts to assist us, not only summoning to our aid his two *garçons*, but produced various mechanical instruments from his stables and outhouses to assist us in our object. I think this is about the stickiest place we have ever encamped in yet: we all shoved ourselves and the *garçons* shoved, and the *patron* brought all his forces of lever and screw and inclined plane into play, and the mares pulled till they got quite out of temper and disheartened, but we were a good quarter of an hour before we had got ourselves

into position for the night, close up against the hotel wall, with a tremendous list to port, so much so that walking about inside the Escargot is something like taking exercise on a Mansard roof: but the proprietor says we must stand here, as one has to be particularly careful when one lives opposite a Gendarmerie.

This is a weird place to stop for the night, particularly windy, and the associations of the cross-roads and the name of the place are distinctly suggestive. Joseph has got a legend all ready-made, to soothe any incipient nervousness on our part, of a horrible murder by a soldier of some thirty or forty people—Joseph's stories never lose anything by the telling—at these identical cross-roads, where he was eventually hanged and then buried under the sign-post, and the place was given its present name, and the Gendarmerie put there in consequence. Joseph is not altogether happy, in spite of the presence of the Gendarmerie: still he has lately taken to comforting himself to a certain extent by the reflection that people ought to be just as afraid of us as we are of them, as they don't know how many bandits there may be concealed in the Escargot, ready to steal out and cut all their throats at some given moment.

L'Assassin is not a very convenient place to get provisions. We got our wine and bread as a great favour from the hotel, though the *patron* gave us to understand that it was at the greatest inconvenience to himself, for he had his house full this evening for a *réunion* of carters from all the country round about. Joseph tramped back into Les Pennes and got some lemons and eggs, and we had to watch for the only *marchand* in the place from whom we could get milk to come by with his flocks and herds at nightfall. He was a party whose principal article of attire was a sheepskin, and looked

exactly as if he had stepped straight out of the "Mas-cotte." We had also some difficulty getting Willie a bed, as there was a great run on them this evening owing to the *r union*, and the only way Willie has been able to secure a room to himself has been by engaging four beds right off all to himself—a lordly offer which Joseph declares will make the natives more suspicious of us than ever, and possibly may excite them into rising up against us in a body. Our private notion is that Joseph wishes Willie to disarm the supposed suspicion by inviting him to occupy one of the spare beds. However, Willie has been firm, as he says he would a deal sooner risk the suspicions than endure Joseph's snores.

We have been playing whist since dinner, though considerably under difficulties, as Willie, who occupied the upper locker, was constantly sliding off against the table, and bringing himself and it and the whole of the cards in a confused mass on to me, who was sitting down below him. Peg and dummy occupied the arm-chair in the gangway, and though they had to balance themselves very nicely, were at any rate out of danger. This constantly one-sided position rather tends to make one a little sea-sick, and the general strangeness of it is not lessened by all the pictures and ornaments which are fixed keeping at their proper relative angles to the floor. James is rather upset like the rest of us, and though there are a lot of cats about, has not been taking the smallest interest in them. Our bed is all down by the head; but I remember once being put to sleep like that in hospital when I had a bad leg, and whether from that or all the other things they did for me I quite recovered: so I suppose the position may be considered healthy, and we have no right to complain, except that we haven't got bad legs.

The carts have been arriving all night, and the court is full

of them; the revelry within is getting fast and furious. The barometer has fallen considerably. I have just looked out, and I am afraid it is blowing up for rain. There are two big



wolf-hounds wandering round the house, waiting to snap up any one they may meet about; fortunately they missed Willie when he went across to bed.

A strange thing has just happened: there has been a fearful crack up above, and one of the planks of the roof has split almost right along its whole length. Peg had vague ideas of earthquakes; but I suppose it is really the change of temperature from the heat we have been lately having to the cold we have come in for now. We have made all the preparations we can against rain with dusters in the stove ventilator, and trusting to it not knowing about the new crack yet. When it does, we shall have to do what we can with putty.

Wednesday, Jan. 22.—We had a good deal of rain in the night, and it was still drizzling this morning, but the sun struggled out, and it gradually developed into a fairly fine day, though somewhat cloudy. All the carts had gone by seven o'clock this morning, in spite of the late hour that the *r union* had been kept up to last night. Willie came down about 8.30; he reported having passed a fairly good night, though it was lucky he had taken the four beds, as their combined clothing only made up a sufficiently substantial covering to just keep the cold out.

We left L'Assassin at 9.40, and immediately entered on the hill we desisted from last night. It was terribly sticky—the hills in the *Cha ne d'Estade*, which this belonged to, are mainly composed of marble, which in wet weather seems to have the property of turning to a kind of Devonshire cream—and quite four kilometres long, and we had a tremendous fight of over forty minutes to get up it, Willie with the reins, Peg putting large marble blocks behind the wheels as we slowly advanced a yard or so at a time—those blocks will be a pleasing reminiscence to any one who follows us up that hill—Joseph on the Missus's back postilion-wise, James limping around again, and, when nobody was looking at him, taking occasionally snaps at his enemies the wheels, and

myself alternately at the mares' heads or at the particular wheel which seemed to be sticking more than the others for the moment: but at last we arrived at the top, 500 feet above where we had started, all of us, Escargot included, one mass of mud, till it really couldn't be said that any one of us was more disreputable than the others—and then we had nothing to do but to go down again.

We hadn't far to go before we got to St Antoine, and rejoined the Route Nationale, after several days' absence from it, and here the outskirts of Marseilles practically began, with suburban villas standing in their own walled gardens as at Wimbledon or Putney, belonging to "individual gents," as Joseph expressed it. The road here became slightly undulating, like the swell of the ocean after a storm. We had a fine view of the bay to our left, with the Chateau d'If in the distance, and on the right the chain of mountains over the end of which we had just been coming. The road was a good deal cut up by the traffic after the rain, and presently we came to cobbles, which were perhaps worse than the ordinary road, as they were very greasy, and it was all we could do to keep the mares from slipping down on the unwonted foothold. We passed the *octroi* without anything but the merest formality, then struggled up a sharp incline all cobbles, and pulled up to inquire for a place to put up at.

Nobody seemed to know of any such place, so we continued deeper into the town, through a greater crowd of vehicles than we have yet had experience of, and none of them seeming to keep any particular side of the road. We passed the Arc de Triomphe, and then went, partly walking, partly sliding, down a tremendously steep street, with Joseph sitting on the brake, and our hearts in our mouths, for the mares were on the verge of slipping down

on to their noses the whole way, and if they had gone down, goodness only knows what would have happened, for the Escargot was travelling purely of her own weight, and all the mares were really doing was helping to keep her back; but we got safely to the bottom without an accident, and found ourselves in a kind of market-place with four promenades with trees, running transverse-wise to the Cannebiere, the principal street of the town. Here we made further inquiries, and were recommended to two hotels in that immediate neighbourhood, but neither of them was suitable, not only because their stables and coach-houses were perfectly dark, like that at Montpellier, but, leaving our own prejudices out of the question, the doors were too narrow for the Escargot to go in. So we backed out of the narrow streets into which we had penetrated, as we found there was no other end to them, and wandered on in an aimless sort of fashion up the tremendous length of the Rue de Rome till we came to the Place de Castellane, where Willie and I got down, and went across to a cabstand to ask the cabbies if they could tell us of any place. They were very friendly, and one of them left his vehicle in charge of a comrade, and came and guided us to a livery-stable just off the Place, but that was again too narrow and dark.

We then decided to continue on the Route de Toulon, on the chance of finding some place where country carts put up, more in the suburbs. Just then a kind youth, who looked like an office clerk, and whom we had noticed more than once following us in our progress through the town, admiring us respectfully from afar, but too shy to make any nearer advances, came forward and modestly ventured the information that we should find a very good place in that direction

called the Chalet, where all the market-carts put up when they came into town. We thanked him, and set off in search of it. On our next inquiry, however, when we had already gone a long way, and there were no signs of the haven where we would be, nobody seemed to know anything about it, and all seemed to be of opinion that there was no place out that way which would do for us, and we were just on the point of turning back in almost despair, when our young friend came up again from behind, where he had been still patiently following us, and said that if we would only be so kind as to take him up on to the caravan, he would stake his honour that we should not be disappointed in him, but he would guide us to the Chalet himself. We accordingly helped him up on to the footboard—much to his delight, as he let out a little nervously, as if afraid that we should put him down again when we discovered that his kindly offer was not entirely disinterested, that it had always been the ambition of his life to travel on a real caravan—so while we were proceeding along, Peg took him inside, and showed him all the wonders of the interior. We went along for about a kilometre by the Chemin de Toulon, and at last came to a great yard opening off the street, with a gate in a high wall. This was the place, and we turned in. The good youth had certainly not deceived us, for this is certainly the best stopping-place we have been in yet—not even allowing for its being in a big town, where we have always found our worst quarters hitherto. We thanked our guide profusely, but he positively refused to accept any sort of return for his kindness—of course, not money, but some little trifle from amongst our caravan treasures—saying that he had been amply rewarded by the gratification of our wish. He introduced us to the *patron*, a big burly

man, who looks like a carter himself, then got down, and saluting us politely, went on his way.

The yard is about four acres in extent, with a *café* and the stables in the far corner. We are in the corner close to the gate: there are no carts in at present, and the main portion of the large space is used as a bowling-alley. The *patron* is a most obliging man, and having satisfied himself of our respectability, is prepared to do anything for us. The first thing he did for us was to find us a laundress, as we are going to stop here some days, and are taking the opportunity of sending our things, of which we have been accumulating a vast collection in our fodder-box, to the wash. Joseph is to sleep in the *café* with the *patron's* family; but there is no suitable accommodation for Willie, so as soon as we had cleaned ourselves he put his necessary things into his bag and we went down into the town to find a hotel.

Willie is putting up at the Hotel de Petit Louvre on the Cannebiere. We have been spending the whole day in the town, lunching at a Duval restaurant, then loafing about enjoying the wonders of the Cannebiere till dinner-time, at which meal we were vastly amused, though at the same time touched, by our observations of our neighbours at the next table—a good old man up for the day from the country, who had got his two soldier sons out on leave, and was giving them a dinner, and enjoying their pleasure at the unwonted good fare in an honest simple way that it did one's heart good to see.

And then came the event of the evening: we went to see Judie. The piece was "Manzelle Nitouche": it might not bear literal translation into English perhaps altogether, but I don't think it was really one whit worse than some

of the things we have on the London stage now. And Judic's acting!—it is as good as a tonic.

We passed some specimens of young Marseilles, evidently burning for a lark, but a sudden cry of "Police!" sobered them at once, and they were even as though butter would not have melted in their mouths. We got home about a quarter to midnight, the good-natured *patron* having trusted us with the key of the gate.





CHAPTER XV.

AT MARSEILLES.

Thursday, Jan. 23.—To-day has been a glorious day. We didn't get up till very late this morning; and when at last we did, we had to exercise some caution over our toilet, for the juvenile population of this part of Marseilles have found us out, and took the keenest interest in our doings in the interior of the Escargot, climbing up on the foot-board and wheels and everywhere where they thought there was a chance of peeping in through the blinds, which we kept tightly drawn, till the *patron* perceived them, and came and dispersed them with a horsewhip.

When we were dressed, we went down town and found a bath establishment, where we had a glorious polish up: for our wooden bath in the Escargot, though highly efficient, is still somewhat confined, and does not allow of that unrestrained splashing around that makes the morning tub at home so delightful. I took the opportunity of having my



hair cut and a thorough shave, and we emerged from the establishment feeling quite new persons. Then we went to fetch Willie from his hotel: James does not go out with us here, as all dogs have to be muzzled in the streets, and he would only be miserable. However, he is perfectly happy, as he has lots of room to run about in the yard, and there are plenty of cats to run after, and when he is tired of that form of amusement, generally some one in the *café* to coax into giving him something to eat, which is his next principal object in life.

We had to wait a little while for Willie, who had likewise got up very late, and was also beautifying himself: then we had lunch at a *café* on the *Cannebiere*, and after we had been to the post and got our letters, and to the bank and got some money, we went to see the port. There were two or three English yachts there, on the way home from the Riviera regattas, and one little steam-yacht that had been making a trip something like ours through France, only through the canals. There was not as much shipping there as usual, an old boatman, with whom we made friends and who wanted us to come for a sail, told us, owing to the quarantine; but there was the most fearful smell there conceivable, and after we had been there a very short time it began to affect us, worse perhaps on account of all the fresh air we have been enjoying lately than it might have done otherwise, so we came away, took a look at the Cathedral, a sort of arrangement in black and white that I don't care for very much, and then went to call on M—— at his office, a sort of connection of ours, to whom we had an introduction, and who received us very kindly, and with whom we have made an engagement for Sunday, as he is up to his eyes in work and can't spare any other day.

Marseilles as a whole is a tremendously busy place; the people here walk faster and talk less about the streets than I have seen in any other town in France. We took another walk up the *Cannebiere*, and Peg bought some stuff for a new dress, and then we had afternoon coffee at the *Grande Maison Dorée*, a palatial edifice on that street: nobody there speaks a word of English, which perhaps after all is much the same that a foreigner would find in London, but one somehow doesn't expect it abroad. Then we came back to dinner in the *Escargot*, buying the materials for it as we came along, and gradually accumulating parcels till we looked like three *Private Secretaries*, only that the parcels were much more untidily done up in flimsy newspaper, and not secured by string, as they never are in France, and it was a great mercy we got them all home safely without spilling any of their contents.

We got a ready-made chicken at a *rôtisseur's* to-day, partly to give Peg a holiday from her cooking, and partly because we were attracted by the performance within the shop, which we witnessed through the windows. The whole thing only seemed to take five minutes: the fowl was plucked, trussed, put on a spit, plunged into what looked like the centre of a burning fiery furnace, held there for a moment or two, and reproduced, not in the form of a "charred remain," as one would have supposed it would have been, but done to a turn; and we were so struck with admiration that we went in and bought it. It was excellent, though of course we cannot admit that we could not have cooked it better ourselves.

After dinner we went out to find a dressmaker for Peg: we had full directions from the *patron*, but somehow missed our way, and did a good deal of the more slummy parts of

the town in the course of our search. We ran her to earth at last, but only induced her by the most specious promises to come back to the Escargot; she was so utterly mystified at the notion that any one living in the yard of the Chalet could require her services. Willie and I sat on the steps and smoked, while Peg and she confabulated inside on the mysteries to which, of course, we could not presume to penetrate; and naturally, when the conference was over, there was not enough of the evening left to make it worth while going out again. Willie went away early to his hotel: I have been writing some letters, and now we are going to turn in.

Friday, January 24.—A lovely day again, and the glass is still going up. Joseph and I took the canvas off the sides of the Escargot this morning, and she now stands in all her beauty of white body with yellow panels ready to enter into the sunny south. We have also given her a thorough cleaning outside, but I am afraid that will only result in more rain and consequent mud the first day we go on again, as it usually has done hitherto.

Willie came round only just in time for lunch, having, for once in a way, as he wished us to understand, overslept himself. We went out in the afternoon to the post-office, where we found a new man in charge—a new broom, I suppose—as he was more particular about giving us our letters than any man we have yet had to do with, and indeed wouldn't give Willie his till he had not only told him what the post-mark on it was and most of its contents, which was all very well in this instance, as Willie was expecting a particular official letter, but might have been inconvenient in the generality of cases.

Then we climbed up an exceedingly high hill to the Notre

Dame de la Garde, a pretty little church perched at the very highest point of Marseilles, with pictures, and models of legs and arms, and bits of rope and wreckage hung up in every available space all round the walls as offerings of thanksgiving for the escapes of the offerers from fire, pestilence, accident, and shipwreck. The pictures are in a great many cases mere daubs, and in most almost funny in their details, but for all that there is a simple faith about them that touches one. The sacristan told us that there are heaps more older ones stowed away in the crypt below, as they are only exposed for a certain time, and by degrees, as more space is wanted for the constantly incoming offerings, the oldest are moved down below, and so on. The golden statue of Notre Dame de la Garde stands on the highest pinnacle of the church, a landmark visible miles out at sea, and a glad sight to the storm-wearied mariner as he at last returns to this haven where he would be. There is a grand view from the terrace of the town and harbour, with the islands outside and the mountains at the back all covered with forest, over which we shall have to pass when we continue on our way.

We walked down again: there is an omnibus which runs up to the top, but it has to go so slowly both up and down that it really doesn't save anything. We went down through some public gardens and came out by the prefecture, where there was a large crowd, waiting apparently for some noted criminal to come out, as the prison van, "Red Maria" here instead of "Black," was waiting at the door, and everybody was very much excited, but we couldn't get any one to tell us what it was all about; that is so often the case on the edge of a crowd. Then we had tea at a *pâtissier's* in the Rue de Rome; the tea was as usual not up to much, but

such cream! and such cakes!! we are thinking about them still; I only devoutly hope we shan't have to go on thinking of them for some little time to come. Then we went and bought presents—Christmas presents—for the people at home: all the bazaars here are *entrée libre*, but it can hardly be said of them that they are *sortie libre*, as it requires a person of great fortitude to walk out of them without having bought something. However, we have got a very fair selection of presents: the only drawback to them is that getting them so long before we go back we may take a liking to them for ourselves, and have to get more for the other people; so there is no real economy in it. We bought our dinner at a butcher's, who surprised us by his polyglottism, speaking English, French, and German all equally well, till we learnt he was an Alsatian: he had on an entire suit of blue linen, which caused us to refer to him as the blue Alsatian butcher at once.

We made a hasty dinner off beefsteak, and then went to the play again, a melodrama of the most conventional Adelphi type, called "La Lutte pour la Vie," which was obligingly translated on the programme, why, I cannot say, unless the French have adopted the English term in the same way as they have our racing terms, "Struggle for Life." The hero was an adventurer, "un vrai struggle-for-lifeur," the argument told us, who enjoyed a tolerably successful career through the first four acts of the play, and of course came to a bad end in the fifth. Favart acted; but we cannot say we enjoyed the play immensely. We had a weary walk home, as we could not induce any cabs to bring us up to our yard; I think the cabbies suspected some evil designs on themselves or their horses when we had beguiled them to these unfrequented parts of the town. Peg looks so like a con-

spirator in disguise. We found James very bad on our return; I think he must have made too many friends at the Chalet *café*.

Saturday, Jan. 25.—A glorious day. I spent the morning greasing the wheels and the fore-carriage, and myself to a considerable extent, as I have at last found something that the invaluable Joseph can't do, and had to take the greater part of the job on my own shoulders. I am sorry to say Joseph can be very stupid when he tries. This morning, when he was helping me to take the hind wheel off, he suddenly let it go, and it came with all its force on my head: I was kneeling down working the jack to get the wheel off the ground; and if it had quite stunned me instead of only half as it did, ten to one I should have brought down the jack, and the whole caravan would have tipped over on the top of me. We had lots of spectators, as to-day seemed to be a sort of holiday, and there have been twenty or thirty trammen playing at bowls in the yard. James has made great friends with them, and varied his usual pursuit after cats by chasing the bowls, but they were very good-tempered about it, and did not seem to mind. However, none of them so much as offered to raise a finger to help me, but after all, they were in their best holiday clothes, so why should they? The wheels wanted greasing, but they have got plenty on now, and as for the fore-carriage, we have put on a small *épicerie*-ful of candles and soap, so that the Escargot ought almost to run away of herself when we go on again.

Joseph has been making *renseignements* about the Route de Toulon from the frequenters of the *café*, and has been so thoroughly crammed up in a series of the most marvellous legends of robbers, witches, and other perils of the road, that he almost seems to be doubtful whether he won't leave our

service before we plunge into such a hazardous country. We have been brought up on most of the stories ourselves, having vivid recollections of the greater part of them at the latter ends of our French exercise-books, which we used to read secretly at school when we ought to have been drudging away in quest of our grandfather's pens, or making personal remarks on the nose of the gardener, and we are happily aware that if these robbers, &c., did ever exist, it was in the good old times a hundred years ago or more; but Joseph takes them all as having happened last week, and likely to happen again next, and refuses to be comforted.

I did not go out after lunch, but stopped at home and gave the inside of the Escargot a thorough scour out with boiling water, yellow soap, and a scrubbing-brush, and now she looks quite spick and span, and the wood and brass work is all as bright as new, in preparation for M——'s visit to-morrow. I have somehow managed to remove all the skin off the back of my own knuckles in the course of the scrubbing, but I suppose one wants practice to be properly hardened to that sort of thing, like everything else. Peg and Willie went out first to her dressmaker to try on the new dress, and then to further explore the town. They discovered the Zoological Gardens, but kindly refrained from going in till I am with them, and contented themselves with seeing the upper end of the giraffe over the hedge.

This evening a poor man, with his face fearfully swollen and tied up in a napkin, came to the foot of our steps and humbly entreated us to remove a tooth which was troubling him terribly. He was most sadly disappointed at hearing that we didn't do any business of that sort, as he told us he had walked from the other end of the town, where it seems our fame has travelled, only people have got hold of a mis-

taken impression that we are travelling dentists. This is quite a new thing we have been taken for: we are getting quite used to being looked upon as a show, and at L'Assassin the *patron* asked us if we weren't vets, because we have a horse-shoe nailed over our doorway; but we have never been asked to practise dentistry before. We were quite sorry for the poor man; and, indeed, when he had gone away lamenting, regretted that we had not tried to remove his trouble, as we have some excellent pincers in the tool-box, and Willie and I are both pretty strong, and I daresay we could have managed it.

We dined out at the Duval Restaurant again. We had Bouillabaisse by way of soup: far be it from me to depreciate what the immortal Thackeray has celebrated, but I think it is a dish that wants an acquired taste to enjoy it. As we got it, the main ingredients seemed to be hot water, bits of thinly sliced stale bread, and the heads and tails of some coarse fish, the whole being strongly impregnated with saffron; but it was the right thing to eat at Marseilles, so at any rate we are happy in having done a duty. We went on to coffee at the *Maison Dorée*, where they keep English illustrated papers of some weeks back, and then we came home.

Sunday, Jan. 26.—Very fine again. We got up latish, but were in time for church, which is held in a room of what seems to be a very inadequate size for the English colony at Marseilles, in the Rue Sylvabelle. Then we went to lunch at Willie's hotel, where M—— joined us, and in the afternoon to the Zoological Gardens, which lie right away nearly straight along the Allées and Boulevards, continuing from the Cannebiere and the Rue de Noailles, at the back of the Palais de Longchamp.

The entrance is up two fine flights of steps, horse-shoe-wise, and through the Palais de Longchamp, which stands in a sort of semicircle at one end of the Boulevard de Longchamp, consisting of the Natural History Museum at one end and the Picture-Gallery at the other, the two being connected by a colonnade, culminating in a triumphal arch in the centre, with a sort of fountain waterfall, with Tritons and other water-beings, between the two flights of steps. The Zoological Gardens are nothing very much, the only animals worth seeing being the bears; but there were lots of people about, and plenty to study in the way of French middle-class society. We brought M—— back to tea in the Escargot, trying a short cut from the Zoological Gardens, and most effectually losing our way in some of the back parts of the town. M—— admired the caravan very much, and stopped till past 5.30, when he had to go away to make up his mails.

We had a late but frugal dinner off an omelette and some bread and butter: the fact was, that after our tea we didn't feel equal to very much lunch. Then we spent the evening talking and making up arrears of correspondence. It has turned terribly cold this evening; the *mistral* has begun, and we are rather repenting having taken the canvas off. Joseph has been to the races to-day, and enjoyed himself very much, having met a lot of his old stable friends: I hope he won't get into any mischief.

Monday, Jan. 27.—To-day has been much colder: the *mistral* is still blowing, and when one is out of the sun is enough to wither one up. I have got a bad cold: I trust it is not influenza, which is prevalent at Marseilles now as much as at other places.

I did not get up till 10.30, and then it was only in response

to a pathetic appeal from Joseph that I should come and pass my judgment on the mares, whom some chance acquaintance of his had, I suppose to get a draw out of him, designated as *maigres*. I can't say that I was particularly anxious to intrude on Joseph's disputes, but I thought there might possibly be something come over our mares, and there is nothing that I am so fidgety about as them, so I dressed hastily and went to the stables and inspected them. They were perfectly healthy, and comfortably sleek, though not too much so, and when, to make sure, I had made Joseph trot them up and down the yard, and had listened to their breathing, there was nothing evident the matter with them, so I was able to tell Joseph I was perfectly satisfied, which brought tears of thankfulness into his eyes, as he replied that since his master had nothing to say against his treatment of his charges, he did not care what spiteful people chose to say about it. I fear, however, that if he could get that false friend into a dark place, there would be trouble of some sort or other ensuing.

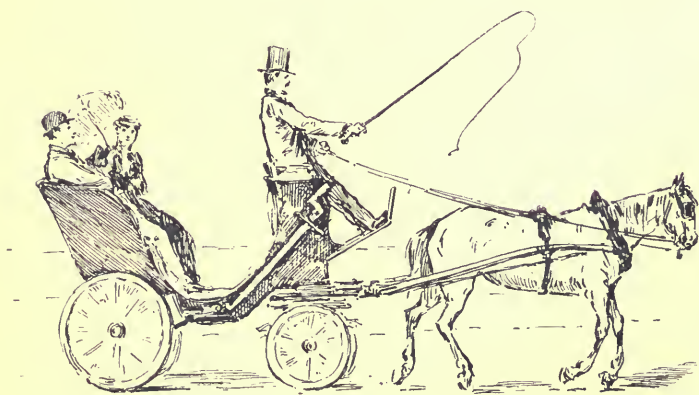
We took out the old brake-blocks this morning, which were pretty well finished off to the very last down the hill in the Rue de l'Aix the other day, meaning to put a couple of the spare ones we have in the fodder-box in their place; but we found when we had got them in that they were a great deal too small, so we have had to send them to a coach-builder to have additional facings put on them; otherwise they would not have bit the wheels at all. In this we were materially assisted by the *patron* of the yard, who proved to be a retired coach-builder himself, and naturally knows a good many others of the same profession. By using his name, we have gained a promise that our brake-blocks shall be home first thing to-morrow morning.

After lunch, Peg and I went out. Willie stopped at home

with James, as he has not been feeling well all day. We went to the post, and then fell into the web of a milliner, who had displayed the veriest duck of a bonnet in her window that completely overcame Peg, and we had to go in and buy it: caravanning has not in the least changed Peg's natural instincts. Then we hired a fly, and took a drive round the Corniche road, going round in fine style, with a great quantity of whip-cracking and putting on of that efficient though exceedingly tardy brake that is common to French vehicles, and which the driver invariably spends quite half his time in putting on and the other half in putting off; past the bathing establishments and all the fashionable seaside villas of the well-to-do Marseillais, with a lovely view of the Mediterranean and the Ile d'If, at least so far as the sun, which was reflected dazzlingly off the blue surface into our eyes, would allow us, by the racecourse to the Prado, the Rotten Row of Marseilles, and down the drive there, back to the Place de Castellane, where we stopped the other day to make our enquiries. We had the drive all to ourselves, as it was not the hour for fashionable Marseilles to turn out, all but one runaway baker's cart, which came tearing down to meet us when we were about half-way to the Place, with three gentlemen riders in attendance, presumably with a vague idea of stopping it, but really only frightening the horse more. How the affair ended we didn't see, but when we last viewed them, the whole cavalcade was making straight to the parapet at the end along the sea.

We got down at the Place de Castellane, and came back to pick Willie up and go by appointment to tea with M—— at the same *pâtisseries* we discovered the other day in the Rue de Rome. His entertainment was even more luxurious than what we gave ourselves on that occasion, and our feelings

afterwards are proportionately greater. Then M—— had to say Good-bye to us for good, as we shan't be fortunate enough to see him again this time, and we went home by degrees, buying some photographs of Marseilles, calling in on Peg's dressmaker, who is not any better than the rest of her species in the matter of punctuality, and purchasing a roll of linoleum, which we have had our eye on almost ever since we came to Marseilles, as a desirable substitute for our carpet, not only because it is cooler now we are coming to more sunny latitudes, but also because it is easier to clean than we have found our carpet to be in the event of culinary accidents. Willie and I carried home the roll ourselves, much to the wonder of the shopman. We mystified him additionally by telling him he couldn't send it home for us, for we had no home. I rather think he imagines we are going to camp out somewhere under the linoleum. We have been spending the evening fitting it to the Escargot: it is a vast improvement.





CHAPTER XVI.

CUJES—LE BEAUSSET—TOULON.

Tuesday, Jan. 28.—To-day has been coldish again, the *mistral* still continuing. We were woke very early, before six indeed, by the coach-builder coming with his myrmidons to put our brake-blocks on, which they did with a sledge-hammer, and it was lucky the brakes themselves are good pieces of wrought-iron, or they would have been smashed all to pieces. Anyhow, they made it quite impossible to go on reposing, so we were both up and dressed by 6.30, and intending to make a virtue of necessity and an early start.

But we experienced all kinds of delays. First, Willie did not appear till nearly ten, having required some little extra bed to get rid of his yesterday's seediness. Then Peg's faithless dressmaker kept us waiting for another hour, and wouldn't have finished then if Peg hadn't gone and stood over her while she put in the last stitches, which, as far as I

can understand those things, meant quite half of what she ought to have done long ago. And then we had a small discussion over the bill, which was distinctly faulty,—we will say, as I liked the man for the many little services he has done us, purely owing to the defective education of the *patron* in arithmetic,—and that had to be carefully worked out all over again. And, lastly, we had to catch James, who was playing bowls with some tram-men and was very loath to come away; so that in the end we found it best to have lunch before we started, and we did not eventually get away till 12.55.

We had to pass through a considerable extent of streets to begin with, not of the best macadam, and we were shaken about fearfully for some twenty minutes: we went down a fair-sized hill, and then along a flat road, gradually at length getting clear of the town, having steep cuttings through what I suppose were the back of the cliffs to our right, and country villas like those we passed coming into Marseilles standing in their own little grounds to the left. The *octroi* on this side was a long way out of the town, very little way indeed before we came to St Marcel; then we continued on over a very bad bit of road full of holes through La Penne, a large village on the side of a hill, to Aubagnac, a large pottery place, where we had to slacken speed to pass through, as the first thing we saw on entering the town was a notice forbidding vehicles to trot. The Missus on this took it into her head that it was time to stop, and we had a tremendous struggle with her, which very nearly ended in our backing bodily into a great heap of pots set out there to dry in the sun, as seemed to be the custom all along the side of the street,—a somewhat risky custom for the safety of the local industry. Joseph thinks that the collars are hurting the mares again.

However, we at last persuaded the Missus to go on, and

we passed down an easy incline through a wonderfully pretty Swiss-like valley in the Chaîne de la Rodesange, and came to the beginning of the forest which we viewed the other day from the Notre Dame de la Garde, with a big hill up in front of us, of which the other end was quite out of sight. The Missus here turned obstinate again, not liking the looks of the trouble to come, and for a minute or so we were in the ditch; but that was more than all our combined patience could stand, and we soon made her pull us out again, and for a good hundred yards or so at a racing pace up the first part of the hill. Then we dropped again into a steadier pace, and went up and up and round about the side of the hills, Joseph beguiling the monotony of the way by retailing all the stories he had heard at the Chalet of the murders and dark deeds that had been wrought on that road, and keeping a sharp look-out for brigands and murderers behind every rock and bush that we passed, till we had climbed up 1100 feet by the barometer: then we paused for a moment and began to go down again.

We went through a wonderfully pretty rocky pass, then down a road winding round the hill to lessen the suddenness of the descent through groves of firs and larches and other timber, and passed the cave of the original Chauvin, the founder of that famous band of ruffians, just off the road, and dilapidated so much out of all resemblance to a cave, that if Joseph hadn't assured us that he had taken all bearings and other *reenseignements*, we should have said that it was a dis-used gravel-pit. Joseph seemed really disappointed, in spite of his previous fears, that Chauvin did not happen to be at home at the time.

At last we emerged, still descending, from the forest, on to the other side of the mountains, and there below us, in a sort

of basin entirely shut in from the rest of the world, was a large fertile plain, with Cujes on the other side of it, nestling under the mountain over which our road continues to-morrow. We came down the rest of the winding descent easily, 500 feet off the 1100 by the barometer, then along a flat bit across the plain, and arrived at Cujes, twenty-seven kilometres, at 4.50. We pulled up outside the Hotel de l'Europe, and we have had a little crowd round us nearly the whole evening, gazing at this strange visitant from the outside world, and admiring our brake, and especially our stop-roller behind, which we have had out to-day, for the first time, as a precaution against any sudden whim of the Missus while we were climbing up-hill. This is a quiet little village, with very simple inhabitants, entirely occupied in agriculture. They don't seem to keep any cows, but use goats instead: James has already had stand-up fights with two of these, and has had to retire decidedly worsted to the inmost recesses of the Escargot, where he has been sulking all the evening.

We have had a lot of trouble with our stoves this evening: first one side of our big one went wrong and smoked, and then the other, and when in despair we turned it out altogether and tried to cook on our little auxiliary stove, which we generally use for lighter cooking, such as omelettes, &c., that went worse wrong than the big one, and if we hadn't turned it out almost immediately, we would have been as black as so many hats in no time. We tried all sorts of remedies: combinations of draughts, door and one window, door and the other window, door and the back window, door and two windows, four different variations, and door and all windows, then all doors and windows shut, but all was of no use; so at last we put in new wicks, and got the big stove into some sort of order, though it is by no means quite

as it should be yet. Maybe it will be better, however, when the new wicks are thoroughly soaked in the paraffin.

Willie has had some trouble at the hotel owing to his having no *papiers*. It is the first time that he has done so, but the simplicity of the people here no doubt extends to a wholesome dread of infringing the smallest detail of the law, and the hotel proprietress was very nearly closing her doors against him altogether, because he couldn't produce any papers to show to the police if they should happen to come and ask for them. However, he eventually partly pacified her by telling them that I have a passport, and if necessary I am ready to show it, and while she was debating in her mind if that was sufficient, slipped up to his room and locked himself in.

Wednesday, Jan. 29.—It was very cold in the night, but perhaps that is only to be expected, considering how high up we were. This morning broke very fine: we did a little more experimenting with our wicks, and I think have mastered them, as they have been behaving very well all day. Willie heard no more about his *papiers*, I suppose because the hotel proprietress thought there was no use crying over spilt milk, and if the police should happen to come and inspect her books in the course of the day after we left, was going to judiciously say nothing about him.

We left Cujes at 9.35. The Missus was a little fidgety at starting: we are afraid it is really the collar hurting her, and are going to take steps the first thing to-morrow morning either to have them altered or else get new ones. However, at last we got away, and had scarcely got clear of Cujes before the mountain began again; indeed the two roads over the mountains at each end of the plain are the only visible

means of getting in or out of it. The scenery soon became very much the same as yesterday; rocky excrescences at the sides of the road and plenty of fir and other timber, with occasional breaks on the side nearest the plain, with little patches of cultivation showing through them. We went up steadily for thirty-five minutes, making only two kilometres in that time, and then stopped for a rest, as the Missus was evidently really in distress, and Mary Ann did not look as happy as she might be in her collar; the collars seem to have got a great deal too big, and throw the weight too far back on their shoulders.

While we were resting, a small boy on a mule passed, evidently a professional *renfort*, as he had all the necessary paraphernalia about him: we debated a little, and decided that it would be kindest to hire his services to assist our poor mares, so Joseph was sent after him—he had already jogged about 200 yards down the hill when we made up all our minds—to make an agreement with him and fetch him back. We agreed with him for two francs, then hooked the mule on to the end of the pole, and proceeded; the mares going more willingly now they had something in front to encourage them, but not too fast, as the boy told us his mule had already been up the mountain this morning three times before. The mule was a very venerable beast, the boy said over thirty, with grey hair and tail, and an extraordinary goatee sort of beard, also grey. His shoes struck us as somewhat remarkable, as they stuck out in front of his feet like a pair of carpet slippers a great deal too large for him; but from our observations the rest of the day, we have come to the conclusion that those must be the shoes of the country. I suppose there is a reason for them; perhaps they are intended to give a better foothold up and down the hills, but I should

have said myself that they were very liable to make the beast trip.

The boy was a pretty little boy, with black hair and very large dark eyes: he told Peg, in answer to her questions, that he was really an Italian, and his name was Emile Caramine; he was nine years old, and had never been to school, and he didn't want to, because he could be more useful to his parents employed as he was now. I have heard boys express the first part of this sentiment before, but I am afraid not many of them from the same disinterested motives. There was a good deal of fun about him, and when he found Joseph was anxious to hear about brigands and such things, lost no opportunity of pointing out their haunts in every sort of hole and behind every large tree that we passed, till one might have imagined that there must have been too keen a competition in that line of business to make it a success in those parts. Joseph took it all in like milk at first, but when he began to suspect from our smiling that he was being chaffed, I am sorry to say got quite angry with the boy, and would have revenged himself on him somehow, probably with the whip, if we hadn't prevented him pretty sharply.

We passed a lot of peasants leading mules, all dressed in large baggy blue trousers (the peasants, of course, not the mules), and with bottles and other provisions sticking out of their pockets, very much like clowns; all evidently returning from *renforcing* vehicles up to the top: *renforcing* apparently is the chief occupation of the male Cujans, while their wives work in the fields. One of these men stopped our boy and gave him some instructions: when we asked the boy what they were, he told us that was his father, and he had been telling him he must ask three francs

when he got to the top, because the mule was tired. It seemed rather an odd way of doing business, making us pay a franc more for a second-hand mule than for a fresh one; but after all it was a good pull up any way, and we did not like to risk the boy's getting a beating from his parent if he didn't take back what he had been told—that is to say, taking for granted that the bright little fellow had been told, instead of ourselves, as to more suspicious people might have seemed the more likely method of making the agreement, and had not been happily and spontaneously inspired to the change in the bargain.

At 500 feet up the forest ceased for a bit on our right, the road rising along the side of the mountain, the slopes below us down to the plain being terraced into well-dug little plots, dotted about with small heaps of earth, each with one straight stick standing upright in the middle of it. We asked the boy what these heaps were, and he told us something about their containing a peculiar kind of stone for putting into vinegar, but we couldn't exactly make out what he meant: I am inclined to fancy that it was only a method of fostering the young olives. There was a *chasseur* got up in the usual style sitting on the edge of the road at this point waiting for something to come by. We couldn't help being reminded of the anglers on the bank of the Thames on a Sunday afternoon, and, maintaining the illusion, we went and asked him if he had had any sport, and he gave us the usual answer, "Not yet": he was watching for a sparrow, he said, which he knew was about there, but though he had been waiting the whole morning, and his comrades had gone into the forest to beat for it, it had not yet come by. So we wished him good-bye and good luck, and passed on, sufficiently interested in him to look

out sharply for the sparrow ourselves, but there was no sign of it: indeed, though we soon got back into the thicket of the forest on both sides of us again, the most remarkable thing, which we had certainly observed before, but now from this circumstance forced itself prominently upon our notice, was the entire absence of any animal life whatever anywhere, except our mares and ourselves. I suppose constant generations of *chasseurs*, ruthlessly destroying everything they met, must have completely denuded the forest of all the *fauna*.

At eleven we crossed the frontier into Var, and stones began at once, the Var people having put them down exactly to the boundary of their department, not an inch more or less. Very shortly after that our *renfort* announced that we were at the top, so we paid him his three francs, giving him the benefit of the doubt, and then went on by ourselves, still through the forest, over a miserably stony and unrolled bit of road for about half an hour, and then began to dip down again slightly. In another quarter of an hour we had left the forest and were out on the other side of the mountain, running down grandly with slack traces, and the brake as hard on as it would go, along embankments and through cuttings, down a series of steady inclines, the road winding so that we could look up and see where we had come along, curling backwards and forwards along the side of the mountain above us.

We came down all that we had gone up this morning in twenty-five minutes: the sensation of the descent was most exhilarating, and there was just enough risk about it to make it exciting, especially in turning the sharper corners from one slope to the other. When we had come down 600 feet, the barometer visibly rising all the time, the road straightened out a bit: we had now got into the midst of olive-yards

and orchards, all the fruit-trees being beautifully out in blossom. The view was magnificent, with plain and forest below us to the right, and a glimpse of the sea in the far distance, with Ciotat lying under a mountain. We saw the sparrow here at last, which the *chasseur* had been looking out for; he has evidently emigrated from his native forest, as he found it too hot to hold him. We had another 100 feet to descend into Le Beausset; the road was much smoother and better than we had had it yet this morning: a *trotteur* came up with us in his skeleton cart and fast pony, and we raced him down to the bottom; he won into Le Beausset, but it was a very tight race.

We reached Le Beausset at 12.30, having done the twelve kilometres down in forty-five minutes, and put up at a hotel standing a little way off the main road, on the side road leading up to the village proper. Le Beausset was all agog with the excitement of the *tirage du sort*, which is going on all over France just now: the Préfet had come over from Toulon for it, and the place was all decorated with flags; the gendarmes were all out in their best clothes, and most of the youths of the village were driving up and down in hired vehicles, with no particular purpose except to air their good luck if they had drawn a lucky number, and to disguise their chagrin if an unlucky one, while those who couldn't afford cabs had formed themselves into a band, and were marching up and down headed by a boy beating a drum, all, I grieve to say, more or less the worse for liquor; but perhaps they had some excuse on this occasion.

We had another little struggle with the Missus getting away, and nearly took a young tree which was standing just outside the hotel door away with us as a memento of our visit to La Beausset. Then we had a long straight piece of

good road through the valley, with a stream running alongside of us to our left, and the mountains on each side of us gradually closing in on the road, till after twenty minutes running we began to go downhill again, and the cliffs came right in on us as we entered the pass of Ollioules, one of the finest bits of our journey yet. There was an old castle on a crag above us, with a village below it commanding the entrance to the pass; then the rocks came nearer and nearer into each other till at last there was only just space for the road to creep along a sort of shelf on the right of the fissure in the mountains, with the precipice on that side rising up sheer above us, sometimes even overhanging us so far as to nearly meet the one on the other side, and a low wall on our left to keep us from going down into the torrent that raged along below on its way to the sea, sharing the space with the road between the two walls of rock.

We had about five kilometres of this, the road being very muddy, as the sun hadn't reached it sufficiently to dry up the rain of last week. We passed several flys with excursionists from Toulon, in the course of our passage through; a very tight squeeze it was to pass them sometimes, and we were not at all sorry for the otherwise absurd upside-down French rule of the road, which gave us the inside, away from the torrent. Then we passed another castle, in a position which would give its holders an indisputable control of the pass—I believe the non-holding of this pass was one of the biggest strategical blunders that our people ever made, and lost us Toulon—and came out into the open again: down another 300 feet through orange and lemon groves—Ollioules is the warmest place, so the guide-book says, in the south of France—to Ollioules itself, a little Italian-looking town, lying in the valley between two hills.

The Missus objected very strongly to go any farther to-day, and we had a terrific pitched battle with her to get her to go up the hill out of Ollioules: getting her up any incline when she takes one of her capricious fits is getting quite a work of art with us now: Willie goes to the head, Peg goes behind ready with large stones to put behind the wheel, and I go to the wheels and heave at the spokes. I believe my chest has expanded quite three inches from all the heaving of this kind that I have done. Joseph stands on the footboard, and generally, in his excitement, not to say wrath at the Missus, breaks out into a sort of war-dance, with a vocal accompaniment, that we trust may be an appropriate war-song handed down from his Gaulish ancestors, but which we are very much afraid isn't; and James jumps round barking, and encouraging everybody with the strictest impartiality, and so we advance perhaps four feet. Then, if Peg hasn't time to block the wheel that hasn't got the roller, and of course she has strict injunctions not to attempt it if there is the smallest risk to her fingers, the Escargot swings round backwards on the one blocked wheel at right angles to the fore-carriage, and we rest there a few moments, and then begin again, and so on up to the top. But when we got to the top of this hill, we found to our joy that it was our last, and that the rest of our course was one steady downward incline into Toulon, which we saw at the end of a long straight road, with its forts and harbour full of men-of-war, showing over the tops of the houses. It was fearfully dusty here, and we almost regretted the mud we had just left.

We had scarcely passed the Ollioules *octroi* before we came on that of Toulon. I suppose the inhabitants of the two communes have put them so close together for purposes of reciprocal retaliation. We had a more rigid cross-exam-

ination than usual at the Toulon *octroi*, but no search. I think the officer was afraid of our step, but he wouldn't have found much if he had looked, except a half-carved leg of mutton, and I don't suppose he would have charged on that. We arrived at the gate through the fortifications, which are much the same as the old Portsmouth lines, at 4.25, thirty-five kilometres from Cujes—a pretty good record, considering the country we have come through.

The gate was very narrow, and only just gave us room to pass, and when we got to the other end of it—it was a tunnel-like sort of construction—there were two low stone posts, just wide enough for the tires of our forewheels to shave between, but just too high to let the axles pass over them. Here we stuck for a few minutes, impeding the whole of the traffic along the main road to the Riviera, and nicely angry several people who were coming behind us were; but we called on the mares, and they made a gigantic and heroic effort, poor Mary Ann all but coming down on the treacherous cobbles that paved the road just at that spot, and the fore-axles actually revolved themselves over the rounded tops of the posts, the whole weight of the forepart of the Escargot coming on them for a moment, the wheels being lifted completely off the ground. We dropped to our proper level on the other side with a shock that testified to the strength of our underworks, but, of course, then we were all right, as the hind-axles cleared the posts easily.

Then we went along the boulevards, Joseph, who was driving, taking us down to the dockyard gates by mistake, where we were challenged by a sentry, and had to turn back again, and out at another gate, which we naturally approached rather anxiously; but, fortunately, there were no more stone posts: over the moat by a drawbridge, and past the bull-

ring to the Hotel du Lapin Blanc, a little *auberge* in the suburbs where country carts put up, and to which Joseph had a letter of recommendation from the *patron* of the Chalet at Marseilles.

The *patron* is a little man with a pointed beard. The *garçon* is a very big smooth-faced man, who looks as if he could demolish the *patron* with one stroke of his little finger if he liked, but, nevertheless, treats him with the profoundest respect. The *patron* was a little nervous about our stove, as he has a lot of hay and straw about his yard, and all his buildings are of wood, but we assured him that we were most careful people, and further, that we had no chimney, and so that there was no danger of sparks; so, for the one reason or for the other, he waived all further objections, and consented to our remaining. We have very snug quarters in the farthest corner of the yard from the road, with a view over some waste building land of the harbour. We have only been out to the post, and to find a hotel for Willie, and since dinner have been spending a quiet domestic evening answering letters, &c.



CHAPTER XVII.

TOULON—PUJET VILLE—GONFARON—VIDAUBAN—FRÉJUS.

Thursday, Jan. 30.—A very fine day. We were not up particularly early this morning, and then spent the remainder of it interviewing more or less unintelligent saddlers about the collars. I didn't much want to go to the expense of ordering new ones, as I paid a good deal for those we have had hitherto, so we tried no less than five saddlers with a

view to having the old ones altered; but none of them could, or more probably would, undertake that job. So as it would be very poor economy to knock up the mares for the sake of saving the price of new collars, we had to order them from the last man we interviewed.

Willie didn't turn up till close upon lunch-time, as it appears that when he went to bed last night he found the hotel people had coolly disposed of his room to some one whom they thought would pay them better, judging from the size of his bag, and had transferred the said bag to another hotel, which he had some little difficulty in finding at eleven at night. After lunch, we went for a walk in the town. We tried to get in to see the dockyard, but we found it required an order from the Governor to do so, and he is in Paris, and not coming back till the middle of next month. So we went down to the *bassin*, and watched the men-of-war, of which there are three—two turret-ships and a despatch-boat—and a lot of torpedo-boats lying in there; and were begged to come for a row round them by various elderly men of a quasi-naval type: but Peg can never make up her mind to go in a boat unless she is absolutely obliged to, and Willie and I, of course, did not like to leave her. James made great friends with a man-of-war's boat's crew that was lying at the edge of the *bassin*, and even went on board, and was as nearly as possible being carried off.

We amused ourselves for some time walking about among the crowd of all sorts and conditions of men which was loafing or hurrying about the quay, and looking at the curiosities in the marine-dealers' shops; and then we went on the Place d'Armes, and listened to the military band playing there while we had our afternoon coffee—James, who never hears music without being affected by it, again

distinguishing himself by taking up a sitting position just under the bandstand, and giving vent to a series of the most sonorous howls in time with the music, till he had got quite a little crowd round him, and we had to remove him on the chain for fear lest he should be arrested by the police.

As we were leaving the place, we saw a poster to the effect that Judie had followed in our track, and was going to play at the theatre this evening, so we rushed home, made a hasty dinner, and went to see her—as she is a form of enjoyment which one should never lose an opportunity of experiencing. We secured the last seats in the theatre, which is a large one, but to-night was crowded. First we had Coquelin Cadet in “*Le Dépit Amoureux*,” and then Judie in “*Niniche*.” It is a rather more questionable play than “*Mamzelle Nitouche*,” but one entirely forgets that in Judie’s acting. The entire audience was as enthusiastic as ourselves, and when the play was over called her again and again, making her sing song after song, till we had to tear ourselves away for fear of being locked out of our yard, and she is very likely going on singing still. As it was, we had to climb in through a broken paling.

The flies here are something fearful: the ceiling is perfectly black with them. They are quite impervious to tobacco smoke; probably French flies get too much of that to mind it, and though we have improvised a fly-paper with a mustard leaf spread over with a mixture of wine and jam, they seem to prefer sitting about anywhere, even in the most uncomfortable places, to availing themselves of the luxuries thus afforded them.

Friday, Jan. 31.—Fine day. I had a bad attack of neuralgia again this morning, and so didn’t get up till late. When I

did get up we all went into the town to find my banker's correspondent. Willie has been reading up the account of the siege of Toulon by the French when the English held it, and pointed out to us the various positions whence the French made it too hot for us to stop in the place: the hill where Buonaparte dragged his guns up to is especially steep, and apparently inaccessible for anything on wheels, and we certainly had our own usual weapon of consummate audacity turned against us on this occasion.

The streets in the old part of Toulon are very narrow and dirty and odoriferous; they wind also in a somewhat confusing manner, and we lost our way more than once; and when at last we arrived at the address given me of the banker I was in search of, we found no signs of a bank there whatever. However, we rang the bell, and were told by the *portier* that though there was no bank there, yet a lady of the same name as the banker lived on the second storey; so we all went up, and found a neat little *fille de chambre*, who held us at bay on the narrow staircase while we told her our story and showed her our letter of credit, and asked her, if that wasn't the bank, if she couldn't at least tell us where it was. I fancy she thought we were a party of adventurers come to get money out of her mistress on false pretences; but while we were parleying with her, suddenly a door on the landing above opened, and a lady in the deepest of widow's mourning came out and asked the maid what we wanted. The maid told her, and then she said, in a rather light and airy way, which didn't strike us as very appropriate to the circumstances, that yes, there had been a bank there once, in her late husband's time, but he was dead now, and for her, her faith! she didn't trouble about those things any longer; and she couldn't even tell us who had succeeded

him in his business—she seemed to have a kind of notion that when a banker deceased, nobody troubled themselves any further about his bank—she didn't think any one had succeeded him: so, as it didn't seem likely that we should get anything more out of her, we bade her good morning, and went down-stairs again to the street.

We were rather up a tree for a little while, as we had come to our last napoleon, and we didn't know where to turn for some more; but we eventually decided on going to Willie's hotel and borrowing a directory, and then working through all the bankers in Toulon till we found one who would honour our circular notes. While we were examining the directory, the proprietress of the hotel came past us, and hearing us mention the name of the deceased banker we had just been to visit, though she could not understand English, was sharp enough to immediately jump at the position of affairs, and telling us that we were not the first people who had been disappointed in the same way, gave us the address of his successor—for he had a successor after all, in spite of his widow's doubts on the subject. It was fortunate that we met the one person in Toulon who could put us in the right track. Then we came back to lunch.

There is a little family party established close to us in the yard, consisting of a father, mother, two boys, and a very pretty little black-eyed girl, who have come up to town in a four-wheeled market-cart with a tilt, under which they are going to sleep to-night, more or less comfortably—rather less, judging from what we can see of the size of the interior and its arrangements. They produced a couple of trestles, three planks, and some stools, and rigged up an *al fresco* dining-room, where they made themselves quite at home over a frugal dinner of bread and olives and half a sardine apiece,

with a bottle of cheap wine. They had even brought the family eat with them; and we were admiring the little scene of domestic felicity, when lo! it was all changed: the little girl offended in some way against the niceties of rural etiquette, and was promptly and embarrassingly publicly chastised by her stern father; the mother took her part, and the two parents fell to mutual abuse and to throwing the remains of the repast at each other, while the two boys endeavoured to pacify them, and only got cuffs from both sides for their pains; and it ended in the happy gathering transforming itself into a very unhappy one, all the five members of it withdrawing angry, and most of them sobbing, into different corners of the yard, where they have remained sulking with each other pretty well ever since. I suppose they must come together some time or other when fatigue obliges them to retire to repose under their tilt; but it will be uncommonly close quarters under there for five people not on speaking terms.

We wrote letters after lunch, and then went out on the boulevards to note some of the humours of the fair which is going on there; but it was very much the same as most fairs, except that there was a little additional enlivenment in the shape of a large body of sailors, who were patronising all the booths with great liberality, and making themselves generally popular with the multitude by their willingness to treat anybody who hadn't any money of his own to spend on the various shows. They especially affected the shooting-galleries. One of these particularly attracted our notice from the novelty of the results of hitting its bull's-eye: a section of a panorama was set going across a little stage on the top of the target, generally representing some episode of French military or naval prowess, while a barrel-organ

ground out appropriate tunes. We stood and watched this for some time, trying to make out what the particular combats and sieges were, a jolly boatswain who was standing by us assisting us in our guesses; till a brilliantly coloured representation of General Boulanger was brought into view, galloping on his historic charger to victory somewhere, while the organ played the Boulanger March, and—we shouldn't have believed it if we hadn't seen it—a gendarme came and interfered; and as there were decided symptoms of a row, we cleared out, not knowing but what, with the readiness of ebullition of the French character, this mightn't be the nucleus of a new revolution; and we came home to tea.

We haven't been out again since, but have been occupying the rest of the evening with a tremendous pitched battle with the flies, which are worse than ever. We have broken two teacups and a milk-jug in our endeavours to get rid of them, and one would have supposed that any fly of sense would have preferred stopping outside in peace to coming into a place where he knows by experience that he can't sit down for a moment to rest without being hit at with the end of a wet duster; but they don't, and are flocking about as persistently as ever, and for the time triumphant, as Willie has at last gone away to bed, and Peg and I and James are completely exhausted with our exertions. Still we have the satisfaction of knowing that there are at least 1000 flies less in the world: it took us a good quarter of an hour to collect the corpses and sweep them out of the door on to the ground below, where they are now lying, quite an appreciable little heap, a regular feast for the cocks and hens of the yard when they find them out. Joseph had a turn at them while we were out, trying to burn them out in some

patent way of his own; but he only succeeded in all but setting fire to the Escargot. One of the mats was well alight, and if we hadn't happened to come in when we did, we should very likely have found nothing but the wheels and underworks left.

We have made a lamentable discovery this evening while searching in the corners and along the shelves for any stray corpses of our foes; we have carried away the door-key of the Chalet yard at Marseilles. I have not unfrequently taken away latch-keys from places where I have been lodging in my bachelor days; but this thing is about the size of an ordinary church-door key, and how it escaped our notice I can't conceive.

Saturday, Feb. 1.—To-day has been cold but fine. We had a bad night, as there was a dog howling at the moon from its rising to its setting without stopping, and the result was that even the alarm did not wake us this morning, for the first time on record. Consequently we were not up much before nine; then Joseph came and reported that Mary Ann had broken a shoe, so she had to be taken to the farrier's; and then the saddler did not turn up as he had promised with the new collars and the traces, which we have had lined with sheepskins, to avoid all possible risk of any more rubbing, as it is best to give the mares every chance before imputing all their caprices to pure cussedness.

The saddler did not arrive till past one, so that we had to have luncheon in our yard, and we did not eventually get away till 2.30, in consequence of which lateness we had to thread our way very carefully through all the carts that had come in during the morning. Our mares were intensely proud of themselves in all the glory of their new collars and in their new sheep's clothing; the man has put

on the entire fleeces, with all the wool hanging in festoons, making them look for all the world like a couple of sofas. Joseph had beguiled the saddler out of a new whip, by way of commission, I suppose, and was proceeding to use it very extensively over the mares when they weren't in the least needing it, till I took it away from him, which put him more or less in the sulks for the greater part of the day.

We had good going as soon as we had got clear of the town and the stones, but the country was not very interesting for the first five kilometres as far as La Valette, a small winding town through which we again had to walk, as one seems to have to do in most of the towns and villages in these parts. There we entered the range of Les Maures, and the scenery began to be prettier, with hills all round, and orchards close to the sides of the road, with the spring blossom out in all its beauty, and olives interspersed thickly amongst the fruit-trees, making a pleasant contrast of different greens.

Sollies Pont, the next place of any consideration that we passed, is a longish town, with the usual labyrinthine kind of streets, boasting gas-lamps—quite a rarity in these parts—and apparently devoted to rope-making and the cultivation of olives, the former industry being carried on in the open street, giving it the appearance of being overrun with countless gigantic spider's webs, and the latter being evident in the numbers of the olive-trees, that had quite ousted every other form of vegetation for some distance in the immediate neighbourhood. There is a very dirty little river with a bridge over it, and an old square keep just at the exit from the town on the east side, which has been patched up, and I think is used as a storehouse for olives.

We bought a cake at Sollies Pont, and as soon as we had got clear of the town had five o'clock tea (without the tea, as we find it next to impossible to boil a kettle while we are in motion) off it, finishing it off at one sitting, as we had a tremendous appetite on from the very fresh air in these parts. Then we continued on through a sort of quarry country to Cuers, where there is a fine Jubilee pump in the middle of the town, and where we had once thought of stopping; but as it was still comparatively early, we came on to Pujet Ville, twenty-eight kilometres, which we reached at 6.15, and put up in a side street off the main street, alongside the Hotel d'Italie, the principal hostelry in the place.

The mares are in a vaulted stable that looks like a cellar, only it is above ground; the half which they are not occupying is fitted up with a miniature theatre, where, the *patron* tells me, they often have first-class operas and plays performed by strolling companies when they chance to come along that way. The population of this place consists, as far as we have seen, entirely of old men, riding about on mules of about the same age as themselves. After dinner, Willie and Joseph and James went in to the hotel to have a game of billiards, James standing on his hind paws with his elbows on the table, and making his remarks on the game in a very pronounced fashion, much to the amusement of the *bourgeoisie* who had come in to take their evening glass of absinthe.

It is much colder this evening, and the glass is falling rapidly; we are afraid we are going to have another dose of *mistral*.

Sunday, Feb. 2.—To-day has been again cold, but fine. Peg had a bad toothache in the night, so we waited a bit

before starting, to let her make up for some of her lost rest, and did not leave Pujet Ville till 10.30. There was great excitement in Pujet Ville this morning over a young criminal who was being walked through the department to Draguignan, the *chef-lieu*, to take his trial for some offence he had committed, and had been put up for the night in the hotel stables. We did not see him ourselves at that time, as he had already gone on when we got up, but Joseph told us about him, and there was a little crowd still standing about in front of the hotel where it had assembled to see him off, all talking and gesticulating at once, just as one sees in England when it has been found that a fox has been depredating the local hen-roosts. The general opinion in this case, too, seemed to be that the moral tone of the village had been in danger from the presence of a hardened criminal unbeknownst in its midst; and even Joseph was more than half inclined to suspect that our mares had been corrupted by his contiguity during the night.

However, the crowd gradually recovered from its excitement, and then, as it was assembled, and it would have been a pity to have let itself disperse too soon, when it probably took a great deal to get any crowd together at all in that district, it turned its attention to us, and a big old man in a shepherd's plaid, of most undoubted Paisley make, proceeded to deliver a lecture on our brake, which, he asserted, was nothing like strong enough for even the lightest kind of vehicle, let alone a great edifice like the Escargot. He proved his case most satisfactorily to himself and his audience, both mathematically and otherwise, and we didn't argue the point; only, when we started, jammed down the lever into the furthest notch that it would go, and proved to him practically that we could skid the wheels if we

liked so that they couldn't so much as go round; and then, wishing him and his disciples a polite good morning, drove away, leaving him looking somewhat discomfited and foolish.

Mary Ann began almost immediately after we had left Pujet Ville to go a little lame, so we pulled up to discover the reason. The near fore fetlock was slightly heated, and Willie thinks it must be a slight strain, brought on by the constant protracted struggles with the Missus; so we bandaged her up temporarily with a surgical bandage out of the medicine-chest soaked in vinegar and water, and proceeded at a walk for the greater part of the rest of the day. At Carnoules and Pignans, the next villages we passed, the whole populations were turned out for the *tirage du sort*, with all its attendant celebrations. The road all along here was very undulating still, amongst the spurs of the Les Maures range of mountains, but rather more down than up, which was lucky, in the present shaky condition of Mary Ann. James has taken lately to bathing very extensively in all the ditches that we pass, and consequently has to run almost the whole of our days' journeys, as he is not, as a rule, in an over-pleasant condition to be allowed to get up at intervals and rest for a time inside the Escargot.

We reached Gonfaron at 12.45, and pulled up in a by-lane alongside the stables of the Hotel du Midi for lunch. The *tirage du sort* was going on here too, but they had only got one recruit; however, they weren't going to forego their fun anyhow, and were making the most of him, parading him up and down the street, with an array of flags and drums, all the same as if he had been twenty or thirty recruits: it is only to be hoped that he didn't have to imbibe all that the said twenty or thirty recruits would have had to do, as, if so,

there would probably not be very much left of him available for military purposes.

We saw the prisoner here; he had been stopping here to rest and to change gendarmes: Joseph tells us that unless a prisoner can pay for his own railway fare or other means of carriage he has to walk the whole way to the place of his trial, passed on from one district gendarmerie to the other. He didn't look a very dangerous individual. Joseph had rather led us to believe from his description of him in the morning that he was a fierce powerful-looking man with crime written on his lowering brow, who might have been arrested for murdering his father and mother and all the rest of his relations under circumstances of the most cold-blooded atrocity, and who was being dragged away to trial and its inevitable consequence the guillotine, loaded with fetters, and between two heavily armed gendarmes prepared to cut or shoot him down on the first symptom of his breaking loose from them. But here was a very small youth, about fifteen years old, and of rather a pleasing countenance than otherwise, whose worst crime might possibly be stealing a few apples out of a shop, and who was going along very peaceably and not at all unwillingly in the merest pair of handcuffs, between his two new gendarmes; indeed it seemed very unnecessary that he should have had two gendarmes at all, as either of them could have easily lifted him off the ground by his coat-collar with one hand, so great was the evident difference between their heights and strengths. However, Joseph wouldn't even then abandon the notion of his being a hardened criminal of the deepest dye, and impressed upon us with the greatest seriousness that one must never be deceived by appearances, for to any one so well up in the annals of crime as he was it was a well-known fact that the most innocent-looking in appear-

ance were invariably the worst offenders against humanity; so Willie asked him which of our party was the most ruffianly in appearance, a *reductio ad absurdum* of his theory which rather shut him up for some time.

We left Gonfaron a little after three, having syringed Mary Ann's bad leg and bandaged it up more effectually while we were stopping. The Alpes Maritimes now began to show up in the distance, looking very fine with the sun shining on the snow on their summits. We began to enter the cork country now; a large number of those trees, many of them partially stripped, being interspersed amongst the olives. We had a capital road, and were making a fair average time of about six kilometres to the hour, without pressing the mares at all, as we were still afraid of straining Mary Ann's leg worse. We passed the prisoner again on the road, still plodding along patiently between his two gendarmes, not looking very unhappy certainly, but a little tired, as he well might be, poor boy, as he had already walked nearly twenty kilometres up to then. Peg made us ask the gendarmes to let him get up for a lift into the Escargot, much to Joseph's horror, who seems to look upon a criminal of whatever degree as a kind of infectious person; but the officials only smiled grimly, and would not vouchsafe so much as an answer, possibly anticipating a rescue, though we told them they could get in too if they liked; so we had to go on and leave him to his fate.

At La Luc there was a great Sunday crowd, nearly filling up the very narrow streets, and though we passed through with the greatest care and at our slowest speed, it was very nervous work, especially as regarded the children, and we had our hearts in our mouths the whole time, lest at any moment we should immolate at least one of them juggernaut-

wise under our wheels. Indeed, as we got farther into the town and the crowd got thicker, we found it more judicious for Willie and myself to get down and walk in front, gently pushing the people to the right and the left to get them out of the way, which they were rather inclined to resent, though it was for their own safety: I suppose their feeling was that in a country of *liberté* everybody has a perfect right to be run over if he or she chooses.

Then we had ten kilometres more of undulating road over the coalescence, so to speak, of the spurs of Les Maures and the Alpes Maritimes. There was a ruined castle on a hill to our left soon after leaving La Luc, a relic of the fine old days when everybody lived by robbing his neighbour, and all along the way to Vidauban there were a lot of queer little white villages perched in strong positions on the hills, where they have probably been for ages, neither growing nor decreasing, inhabited by generation after generation of the same families, and most likely very little altered in their customs from those of the middle ages: and so at 5.50 we at last came to Vidauban, thirty-six kilometres, a little town with one wide street of one or two storeyed clean-looking white houses, with trees in front of a great many of them on the side walks.

We stopped first at the Hotel de Provence, but the stables were not good, so we went on into the farther outskirts to a little hotel close to the railway bridge that crosses the road at this end of the town. Here a nice old landlady with two comely daughters came out to welcome us: there was no man about the place at all, but the two daughters took charge of the mares while we deliberated with their mother about the best place to stow the Escargot. There was a little yard shut off from the road with iron gates, where

she thought it would be safest for us to turn into, but it was half-full of heaps of mould, placed for the most part against the gates and preventing them from opening inwards. Joseph wanted to dig a way in, but the only available tool on the premises being a very small coal-scoop, we eventually decided to risk the police, and drew up by the side of the road nearly under the railway bridge, engaging ourselves to indemnify the old lady if she got into any trouble therefrom.

The daughters led the mares away to the stable, and after Willie and I had given Joseph directions for doctoring Mary Ann's strain, we went into the village to get provisions. Peg did not come with us, as she is still suffering from toothache. The result was that Willie and I, being left to our own resources, incurred the suspicions of a *gendarme*, who was the only person we saw about, by asking him if he could recommend us to the best *boulangiste* in the place, and he accordingly appeared later and demanded our papers. However, the sight of the Lion and the Unicorn at the top of our passport mollified him, and he went away reassured that we had not come to foment dissension in the district.

Willie and I cooked the dinner with great success, only that I stumbled once and upset the gravy, partly over Willie and partly over James, and the plum-pudding came out of the saucepan in rather a fragmentary condition. We have a heavy list to starboard to-night, and we can't see our feet when we are in bed, but that is a distinct improvement on the position of the other evening at L'Assassin. The *train de luxe* has just passed to Nice. It gets there in two hours from here; we shall take at least three days.

Monday, Feb. 3.—There was a hard frost in the night.

James disturbed us a good deal in the small hours of the morning, as he woke up very early, and having no idea of time, would not rest till he had been let out to search for cats. Then, as there were of course none to be found, he came back on to the footboard, and we not feeling inclined to get up and let him in again, revenged himself on us by waltzing about, and scratching and throwing himself against the door, making it impossible for us to get comfortably off to sleep again; and, of course, on principle we couldn't give way to him, as we wanted to teach him not to keep such unreasonable hours; so he kept up his antics till seven o'clock, when it was time for us to get up for the day. We rubbed Mary Ann's leg well with embrocation, and bandaged her up with a gaiter made of a piece of sheepskin that we had over from the traces, made fast with two umbrella-straps, which made her look more like a large sheep than ever. Then we bade a tender farewell to our kind old lady and her two daughters (Joseph gave us to understand that he has engaged himself to both of them), and left Vidauban at 10.50.

We had a long incline to climb up to begin with, and very muddy, for it seems to have been raining lately in these parts; but when we got to the top we found the road fairly flat over a plain covered with orchards and olive-yards and small patches of the minor sorts of cultivation, with the snowy Alps shining in the distance on the edge of the plain. We trotted a good bit after we had surmounted the hill, Mary Ann's leg seeming to be a good deal better for all the rubbing and douching. We crossed the Argens close to where it went down over a very pretty waterfall, and then went on without a single stop to Le Muy, eleven kilometres, in $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour. The straps of Mary Ann's gaiter did not prove such a success as

had been expected, so Willie and I occupied the time on the road preparing another gaiter out of another bit of sheepskin, which was to be secured with tapes. The sewing on of the tapes was not at all an easy operation while we were trotting. In the first place, it took the combined forces of Willie and myself to thread the needle, and then to get it through the tough sheepskin we had to pass it backwards and forwards from one to the other, occasionally hammering it through with the rolling-pin. However, we finished it triumphantly just before we got to Le Muy, and stopped by the side of the road to apply it in place of the original gaiter, which by this time had slipped well down round the mare's shoe, and was practically of no use whatever.

The streets of Le Muy were even narrower than any of the towns we have yet passed, and there were two sharp turns in it, coming round which we all but carried away a couple of processions of carts with old women in them and brought them unwillingly along with us, and we were not sorry when we got to the other end. Unfortunately, the Missus had been showing symptoms of a return of her old obstinacy, and we thought it best to go through at a half-trot; and when we emerged from the street into the open country beyond, we found a notice at that end threatening all sorts of pains and penalties on drivers who went through the town above a walking pace; but it was too late to attend to it then, so we felt the next best thing was to whip up, and put as great a distance between us and the authorities in as short a time as possible. There was a bridge over the Argens at the end; then a short upward incline, and the mountains closed in on the road again, till we found ourselves in another picturesque pass, with heathy slopes to our left and broken masses of rock to our right, with the Argens foaming along

its rugged course below; just the place, Joseph said, for a murder: that boy will end his days on the *bascule* yet. The day had been rather dull till now, but now the sun came out in all his splendour, and we had it beautifully hot for the rest of the journey.

We had a good bit of level road for a time: then it began to ascend. The Missus tried to strike work again, and was on the point of refusing to take the hill, but we are getting to know by experience when that sort of thing is going to happen, so our struggle this time was of very brief duration: Willie and I were down in the road at her head, and Joseph had begun his war-cry from the footboard even before she had stopped: she just jibbed twice, then seeing that we were prepared for her and weren't going to have any mischief, gave up the attempt, and carried us to the top without another word. Then we came to Pujet-sur-Argens: the people about here are all most unmistakable Savoyards, and to our English eyes look quite strange without their accustomed attributes of organ and monkey.

The streets of Pujet-sur-Argens are very narrow and very badly paved: the Missus had another fit of the sulks here, and stopped dead short in the middle of the town, probably having made up her mind that she ought to stop there for lunch. It was an extremely awkward position for us, as we filled up the whole of the street, and our efforts to make her move were attended with infinite peril to the shop windows of the inhabitants: but man at last triumphed over the brute, and keeping up a running fight the whole way, we partly led her, partly pushed her, through the town, only nearly squashing an old gentleman this time, who lost his hat and his head in his endeavours to flee

from the approaching danger, and was all but being jammed between the hind wheel and the wall, if Willie hadn't just pulled him out in time. The Missus reconciled herself to her destiny, and took us along stolidly for another three kilometres, the road being quite flat here along a kind of causeway with marshy-looking country on both sides, till we came in sight of Fréjus.

We met a lot of school excursions returning from Fréjus in brakes, who all shouted and yelled at us in the friendly way common, we conclude, to school excursions in all countries, and thirty young priests out exercising two and two from the seminary at Fréjus. Joseph has his superstitions about meeting priests, as about most things, and was positive we should come to some grief after this encounter, retailing to us all sorts of accidents that he knew had happened to people of his acquaintance, purely because they had met a priest when they were driving; but we partly comforted him by suggesting that there was safety in numbers, and the evil influence of these priests must be so greatly diluted amongst the thirty of them that it practically amounted to nothing; and, as it proved, we didn't come to any accident, but, passing the old Roman circus to the left, entered Fréjus in safety at 2.15, and established ourselves for the night on the public *place*, which formed a sort of raised platform to the side of the road at the entrance to the town, just opposite the Hotel de Commerce, where we have stabled our mares.

The *patron*, an Italian, who, dressed in the height of fashion as much *à l'Anglaise* as he could get it, was sauntering up and down in front of his hotel under an umbrella, wasn't sure, but he didn't think, in his casual Italian fashion, that the police would interfere with us, and they haven't

done so as yet. The *garçon* is also an Italian, and equally casual with his master, who leaves the whole management of the stables to him: he didn't know but what there might be room for our mares in the stables, we had better go in and see for ourselves; which we did, and found that we could have the whole run of the stables. We helped ourselves to straw, and got our own water, the *garçon* standing at the door all the time with his back turned to us, with his hands in his pockets, perfectly indifferent to our proceedings. I don't think I ever came across any one so absolutely apathetic to all that was going on around him, though I have no doubt a good bit of it will clear off to-morrow when the time comes to pay the bill.

But every one seems to be more or less sleepy and apathetic here: one would almost suppose that ever since their splendid harbour, which once could float all the fleets of Rome, had silted up, they had given things in general up as a bad job, and determined never to try and do anything worth speaking of ever after. There was a row of idlers sitting under the wall over against us while we were cooking our lunch, but they didn't display the smallest curiosity or interest as to our doings, and one by one while we were eating it dropped off to sleep. Other people had come out with all the paraphernalia for a game of bowls, but before they could make up their minds to choose sides and begin, they had all selected trees to lean against and had dropped off to sleep too: so as it seemed to be the fashion, after lunch, Peggy having to do some repairs or something to her dress, Willie and I took possession of a seat on the *place*, and went to sleep in the sun too till she was ready.

We sat there for about an hour very happily, and then Peg came and woke us up again, and we took a walk with James down the Boulevard de la Mer, a rather scanty avenue leading over a very flat bit of country laid out in small holdings, probably the result of the silting up of the old harbour, down to the present shore. We passed some old Roman walls, very low, perhaps the remains of some of the ancient quays. There is a splendid strip of sand along the shore, and the Fréjus people evidently bathe there



in the summer, as there is a bathing establishment, with a *café* attached, but they are both shut at present. St Raphael lies to the east about two miles off, in a little bay of its own, with rocky cliffs beyond it, and the Alpes Maritimes appearing over all in the distance behind, with the setting sun shining on the snow on their summits. We sat down and watched the sea for some little time. James had never seen it before, and was very much surprised at

the novel sight, and apparently rather irritated at the waves: then we took the opportunity of throwing him in for a bath, and he was more surprised than ever, and very much irritated at us, running ahead of us all the way back and refusing to speak to us, and he has scarcely got over it yet.

When we got back we found Joseph had been busying himself about a *renfort* for the morning, as we start for a long pull up over L'Esterel directly we leave Fréjus to-morrow, and has secured one. He won't come under 10 francs, but from the appearance of the climb on the map, and in the present dilapidated state of our mares—for I am afraid that the Missus can't be in the best of health or she wouldn't be so whimsical—it will probably be worth the money: anyhow, we certainly can't do without some *renfort*, and if the natives are really taking advantage of our need, we must grin and bear it. Joseph has made friends with a small boy who is attached to the stable in some way, and has been trying to douche Mary Ann's leg with our little pump, but has missed her somehow and douched the *patron*, who was still strolling up and down, instead, much to the wrath and disturbance of the Italian apathy of the latter, and it took some little diplomacy on our part to persuade him that we had not commanded the insult.

We have been taking an inventory this evening of all the things we have collected on the journey—purely by accident—from places we have stopped at. We have, besides the Marseilles key, a saucepan from Cujes, and six coffee bowls from various places in which our milk has been handed in to us in the morning, and which we have forgotten in the hurry of departure to return: but we can salve our consciences

to a great extent with the fact that all our own bowls that we had when we started have been left behind at one place or the other, besides which there have been one hay-fork at Toulouse, a small spirit-lamp kettle at Toulon, and any amount of dusters which Joseph has had for stable use, and which will quite compensate the owners of the bowls for their loss—if we have only left them at the right places.





CHAPTER XVIII.

L'ESTEREL—CANNES

Tuesday, Feb. 4.—There was another hard frost in the night, but the day has been very bright and fine. We were up early, and had everything ready and our bill paid—which after all was not so very exorbitant, though we considered it rather calm on the part of the *garçon* demanding a *pour-boire*, after all he hadn't done for us—by eight, at which time the *renfort* had promised on his word of honour as a *renfort* that he would come round. He didn't eventually appear till 9.30, and then it was to tell us that he had changed his mind and wouldn't come

with us after all; but he had had the grace to find us a substitute, whom he had brought along with him, and to whom he introduced us—a venerable mule, in charge of a funny old toothless gentleman dressed in a suit of corduroys, and who, from his appearance, might just as well have been the oldest inhabitant of an English village as of a foreign town.

We navigated down the slope off the *place* and went through the town past the seminary, and the hill began immediately we were clear of the town. There were more Roman remains on this side; several arches of a very fine aqueduct, further relics of Fréjus's departed greatness. The country round was stony, and productive of nothing but cork-trees; but there were plenty of them, and from the numbers that were stripped, it would seem that when the Fréjusians are not asleep they do a considerable business in that line. We all got out and walked for about two hours, to relieve the mares of at least our weight, except Joseph, whom we left on the footboard to drive: he persuaded the *renfortier*, who was a good-natured old fellow, to hand over the charge of his beast to him, and was very proud of his miscellaneous team of three; but it was not at first so much of a success as it might have been, as the *renfort's* harness was a peculiar arrangement of a kind of running rigging, and it kept shooting out ahead like the small end of a telescope, till its owner took it in hand, and, by a complicated system of knots and splices, prevented it from doing so any more.

We were not long before we were well into the Esterelles, the road winding in a zigzag fashion in and out, according as the engineers had seen their opportunities, round the sides of the hills, rocky in some places, covered with bits of forest in others, and with a stream dashing along at the bottom of

the precipice to our left. The old road, whose makers, after the fashion of their time, had carried it in as direct a fashion as possible, without regard to the convenience of travellers, took a much steeper line almost straight over the mountains to our right. Willie presently got in, as his foot began to hurt him from some cause or other, and Peg and I kept on walking: and we came to a wild ravine, down the middle of which the torrent rushed at the bottom, with the road on the right at the top of a steep precipice going sheer down to it, and an equally steep cliff rising sheer to the right again of the road. Here Willie and Joseph broke into a trot, as the road descended for a bit on this sort of shelf along which it was passing, and Peg and I were left behind and had to toil after them for some time, not being able to make them hear our shouts to them to stop. The road then crossed a sort of Devil's bridge, from one side of the ravine to the other, high up above the torrent, and began to climb in a steady incline up the side of the mountain again: here the truants stopped, and gave us time to come up with them.

We got in again, Peg rather tired with her walk, and we continued on along a road dug out of or banked up against the side of the mountain, occasionally stopping for a blow, always rising, right round a sheltered valley, which the enterprising mountaineers had cultivated into fields and vineyards, and were working there happily below us; a triumph of industry over nature, though amply rewarded by its results, as the valley, once brought into cultivation, must be a perfect natural hothouse, and productive of pretty nearly anything one could wish: but we would like to know those people's history, and what first induced their forefathers to come and live there. Joseph, who had been passing his time coming up the mountain in being crammed up by the old

renfortier—who had at a very early stage of the journey taken up his position on the footboard—in all sorts of new brigand stories, gave it as his opinion that they were the descendants of brigands, and that when they had done working in their fields, they resumed their ancestors' former occupation by way of recreation.

Some fellow-travellers here joined us, consisting of a very big fat French *commis voyageur*, with his very small thin wife, a rather pretty little woman, with whom Peg fraternised, in a typical *commis voyageur's* four-wheeled chaise, with a hood over the front seat, and the back piled up with boxes of samples covered over with waterproof cloth, drawn by a fat but willing little pony; who, as soon as we came up to him, made up his mind that, at any rate, we shouldn't pass him, and put his head down and pulled away most pluckily, keeping ahead of our great mares and their *renfort* all the way that we kept in their company. Our fat friend was delighted to see us, partly because at first he took us for fellow *commis voyageurs*, but mostly, as he told us, with a sigh of relief, almost immediately on our coming up to him, because our combined forces would prove more efficient in case of our meeting any bandits, as it appeared that he shared Joseph's fears in that respect most implicitly. He strongly objected to the mountain, and he certainly looked, poor man, as if he had good reason, as I don't think I have ever seen any one in such an absolute state of melt before, but he took it very cheerfully, and made very fair company all the way that we went along together, giving us his opinion of the different parts of France, both physically, socially, and commercially. He and his wife certainly had had plenty of experience, as they were travelling for a large house in Lille, whence they had set out in February, and had been more or less on the go ever since.

He was very proud of his little pony's performances, and chaffed our big mares most unmercifully, as if they were human beings, at their letting a little animal so much smaller than themselves keep ahead of them; but still he was very anxious not to offend, and, thinking perhaps that he had hurt our feelings, presently fell to praising our mares' size and strength, and coveting them for himself, estimating critically about what price one ought to give for a pair of mares like that, &c.: while his little wife, whom Peg had invited up into the interior to see the domestic arrangements of the Escargot, was charmed, and insisted on a promise from her good man, then and there, that when he got on he would buy a caravan like that, in which they could travel about, and take *les petits* with them; for, poor woman, she told Peg that she had left three *petits* at home in charge of her mother, and she had not seen them for twelve months; she would not leave her husband, as he was so delicate, and often required her to nurse him.

We continued on in our little procession, still winding up the mountain by a sort of circular road, mostly rising up by gradual inclines one over the other, so that we could look down and see where we had just come along below us, but sometimes passing through cuttings. The mountains here are of porphyry, mostly covered with thick though scrubby vegetation, but occasionally the porphyry crops out in great bare masses: torrents rushed down through narrow ravines to the valley below, passing under the road through culverts in the narrow embankments built up for it to travel along against the side of the hill. There was very slight pretence in most places at any sort of parapet, and altogether we agreed that it was not exactly the sort of place for a runaway horse on a dark night.

It got hotter and hotter as we climbed, and the sun climbed too, beating down upon us, and being likewise reflected on us off the sides of the mountains all round us. At mid-day we had done eight kilometres in 2 hours 5 minutes. We then came to a narrow sort of neck, across which the road was carried from one side of a valley to the other, with slopes sheer down 650 feet on each side, very like the Coupé at Sark, but, I should say, higher, and with only just room for our wheels. It was very jumpy work, as one error to the right or the left would have thrown one of the wheels over the edge, and then a short struggle, and ——: we didn't breathe comfortably till we got to the other side. We were then on Mont Vinaigre: query, Was this the place where Hannibal climbed over into Italy?—it would be about the most direct route from Spain—and does this mountain take its name from the old vinegar story we learnt at school?

We passed through a short cutting, and though not yet quite at the top, were virtually on the east side of the mountain, and now the Mediterranean appeared in sight, with Cannes lying what looked like close below us, though we had still a long way to go. We now came to a vast array of unrolled stones—I suppose they can't very well get a roller up there—sometimes on one side of the road, sometimes on the other, but we couldn't very well shirk them, as the ingenious *cantonniers* had barricaded off the stoned parts with big knubly boulders and trestles and poles, so as to compel every passer-by to contribute his share to the public benefit. Here we at last parted with mutual regrets and good wishes from our fat friend and his wife, who turned off to the left to go to Esterel, which lies on another hill in that direction.

We had now got into a region of more real timber again. There was a lot of mimosa about, and while we were resting a bit before tackling the stones, Joseph decorated the mares at every available point, till they looked like a couple of Jacks-in-the-green. We dragged on up to the top of the hill, which we reached at 12.40. There the *renfort* left us, quite satisfied with his reward, and we likewise, for it was a much stiffer pull up than we had expected, close on ten kilometres straight on end. Then we began to go down again, having a fine view of the country below us on the left, more or less woody, with Grasse and the Alps in the distance: the timber became thicker and larger by the sides of the road as we descended, and, with the mossy turf beneath them, reminded us very strongly of Burnham Beeches.

At 1.15 we reached Esterel les Adrets, which consists of only an *auberge* and a gendarmerie, like L'Assassin, the *auberge* standing back from the road, with two large trees, beeches, if I remember right, and its sign, with the horse-trough at its foot, in front of it, just like a typical English inn. Indeed, with the mossy bank and the wooded slopes rising up off the road on the other side, it looked very like a thoroughly English scene, say in the New Forest, altogether. This peaceful-looking spot, however, was the scene of Joseph's most thrilling brigand story, which he had been saving up for us all the time till now. It was to the effect that one night a traveller, who had put up there, having his suspicions aroused by the sinister expressions and the muttered whisperings of the *patron* and his wife,—there can be no doubt that professional brigands and those sort of people invariably do cultivate sinister expressions and whisper mutteringly; it pays them so well, being calculated to inspire so much confidence in the breasts of their intended victims,—well, having

had his suspicions aroused as above, this traveller took the precaution before getting into his bed of looking under it, and there he found a corpse! so he promptly opened the window, and lowering himself to the ground, went away without troubling to ask for his bill, and straight to the nearest gendarmerie at Cannes, and on a force being sent up, the *auberge* was found stocked with corpses in every available place. Joseph was quite perfect in his story so far, and could even show us the window, but he didn't seem to realise the natural sequence of the story, and was more than half inclined to believe that the wicked *aubergistes* were still living there, with the difference only that the gendarmerie had been put opposite to keep an eye on them, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we could persuade him to go in and see if he could get some milk for our lunch, as he was all but positive that he would be fallen upon and have his throat cut directly he got inside.

The *patron*, however, came out himself, a highly respectable retired-servant-looking sort of man, and placed his whole *auberge* at our disposal, so far as lay in his power, but he was sorry he couldn't offer us a room to sit in, as the only one he had fit for us was already engaged for the owner of the property round there, whose steward he was, and who was coming up to go over the property this afternoon. We set his mind at rest by telling him, with thanks for his good intentions, that all we required was some milk, and, if he could spare them, a few eggs and some bread, and he brought us plenty of all. Joseph, however, still doubted, and was of opinion that all this was just meant to inspire false confidence in us. Nothing, however, turned up of a more suspicious nature while we were having lunch than the appearance of two elderly maiden ladies in a hired barouche, which was

put up at the *auberge* stables, while they wandered off amongst the trees in search of the picturesque.

When we had finished our lunch and were digesting it, Willie and I sitting on the footboard under the shade of the trees, and Peg doing some little sewing item inside, the expected owner of the property drove up in a brougham accompanied by a lady, and getting down at the door of the *auberge*, went in. We thought we heard the lady speaking English, but did not pay very much further attention to it; but a little while after, when they had finished their refreshment inside, the lady came out just as I chanced to be calling James to order for hunting about the *patron's* fowls, on which she came straight across to us, and asked us if we were English. We admitted the soft impeachment, on which she accorded us a most hearty welcome in the name of her friend, the owner of the property, expressing her surprise at finding English people there, and in a caravan too.

We invited her up, and she warmly approved of all our interior arrangements, telling us further that she was an American citizeness, and had spent some time in a somewhat similar caravan all by herself out on the Texas prairies, and had never enjoyed herself so much in her life before or afterwards. Then she went and called her friend to come and look at us: he was also very much pleased, but I fancy rather made a mental note of further eccentricities on the part of the English. However, he disguised his feelings very politely, and when he discovered that we had not yet any place in our mind's eye to put up at in Cannes, invited us to come and put up at his place just outside; but we didn't like to trespass too much on his hospitality, so thanked him and declined. Then he advised us to keep behind his

carriage on the way down, as the road was rather a dangerous one, and his coachman might be of service to us as pilot.

This offer we accepted, and at 3.30 left the *auberge* for our downward course, Peg having walked on in front with the American lady for the first two or three kilometres of the road, to be picked up by their respective vehicles. We went round the top of the next valley, still through the forest, behind the brougham; then after we had picked up the ladies, there was a bad bit of hill with plenty of stones on it for about two kilometres, more out in the open, giving us a nearer and better view of Cannes, and then the road began to go down, getting steeper and steeper, till we were at last obliged to put on the shoe, much to Joseph's disgust, who was driving. We went again winding down the side of the hill by a series of terraces till we had nearly reached the bottom. The gentleman again got out of his brougham and ran back to press us to avail ourselves of his stable, but we again declined; he looked very much disappointed, and when he had got in again, his coachman put his horse to a trot, and they disappeared out of sight.

We continued down to the flat, past the racecourse and the *Parc des Esterels*, and a succession of eligible building-plots and boulevards, with nothing yet erected along them but the name-boards, very much the same as at an English watering-place, till we came to the *Bocca*. There was a big hill leading into Cannes proper, up which we had half climbed, when our friend's coachman, who had got back into plain clothes, came running after us, to say that he had been waiting at his gate for us for a long time, as his master insisted on our coming to put up at his place after all. There was no declining an invitation that was clearly so really

meant as this, so we turned round, much to the Missus's delight, who was already beginning to meditate a rebellion, and came down again into the great Bocca glass-works, which belong to our host, through the great yard and along a narrow passage, with bottles stacked up on each side—and if our near axle hadn't just passed between two rows of necks as they stuck out, there would have been fearful havoc wrought on that journey — and so into our host's private garden, which is only separated from the shore by the railway, where he had insisted we should be put up, in spite of all our protests against such kindness to his coachman, who acted as his deputy.

Our host has been behaving like a prince in an Arabian Night, and we haven't seen him yet since our arrival to thank him. The mares were put into a very comfortable private stable in company with the brougham horse. A neat little *jille de chambre* presently came out with a tray with five o'clock tea on it, with Madame's compliments, and regrets that she could not see us to-day, but hoped to do so to-morrow. Then I got another attack of neuralgia, so Peg and Willie have been into the town to dinner by themselves, and to find Willie a hotel. They report having found a splendid place, the Faisan Dorée, rather dear, but elysian in its appointments and food; but the town is a tremendous way off, nearly three kilometres. Willie has had some trouble in finding a hotel, but has at last got a room at a little Hotel Suisse, a sort of *communis voyageurs* place; all the other hotels are full. Joseph is sleeping at the coachman's. Truly our lines have fallen in pleasant places.

Wednesday, Feb. 5.—To-day has been very fine, but very cold, and we have been going about in greateoats all day. We have spent the day doing Cannes: it is a beautiful little

place, but I can't say I should ever care to live there for any length of time, as there is too much of the fashionable walk-about-on-the-parade-in-one's-best-hat-and-clothes place about it to suit me.

It is a very long walk into the town, taking quite half an hour along a very up-and-down road, with nice villas on each side with walled gardens overlooking the road. We went in for the first time in the morning, and walked up and down the Rue d'Antibes, the principal street in the town, looking in at the shops and making one or two purchases of the usual olive-wood *souvenirs*, &c., amongst them a sort of cookery-book almanac, with a dinner and lunch on it for every day in the year: we are afraid, however, that most of its *menus* are rather beyond the capabilities of our stove and other culinary equipments. There were not many people about; I suppose it was too cold for the habitual residents and visitors. We went to the post and on the promenade along the sea, where there is a statue to Lord Brougham, who invented Cannes, and died here. When we got back to our quarters at the Bocca for lunch, we found Joseph had decorated James in bright red ribbons round every available place he could put them—his neck, legs, tail, and ears—making him look like a clown dog. James did not appreciate his finery at all, and was waltzing round and turning somersaults with great energy to get rid of it.

We returned to the promenade after lunch, and after having bought an English paper, and after having read it entirely through, from the births, marriages, and deaths to the printer's name on the last page, found our way to the public garden, where the band was playing. At first the garden was almost entirely occupied by nursemaids and children; then, a little later, on came an influx of Germans;

and, last of all, specimens of the English population: there were a lot of people whom we knew by sight in London, but we haven't as yet met any one we know to speak to, though we have no doubt we should come across some if we only stopped here long enough. All the young English ladies seem to have gone in for Kodaks, which they carry about slung from their shoulders by a strap, with the push and button conveniently close to their right hands: which is calculated to make one plume one's self up a bit, as one never knows that they mayn't be shooting one if they fancy they see anything peculiar about one.

We had afternoon tea at a confectioner's on the Rue d'Antibes, and then loafed about till time for dinner, which we had at the same place where the others had it last night, the Faisan Dorée. It is a very expensive place, and we were constrained to restrict ourselves to soup, a beefsteak, and a sweet omelette; but such soup! and such a beefsteak!! and such an omelette!!! This is written without any prejudice to Peg's cooking, who could, we know, turn out any of these things quite as well: I speak thus laudatorily with the mental comparison only to the ordinary French *café* restaurant. On returning home again, we found that our host had left cards on us, inviting us to tea with them: so we went in, and have been passing a most pleasant evening in the bosom of the family. This consists of our host, his mother, and his elder brother, and there was also a naval lieutenant, on leave for the night from the squadron in the Golfe de Jouan: none of them could talk any English, but they were most lenient to Willie's and my French, and, of course, Peg got on without the slightest difficulty. They insisted on a recapitulation of the whole of our adventures, producing a series of the most splendid ordnance maps,

about six inches to the mile, to illustrate them. We asked them as to the truth of Joseph's legend about the *auberge* on the Esterelles, which, they say, is more or less true in a general way; but the evil-doings that went on there took place in the middle of last century. The naval lieutenant told us that the *Lapin Blanc*, where we stayed at Toulon, has a fearfully bad name, and they were all much impressed with our hardihood at stopping there; though where the hardihood came in, when we were quite unaware of any peril, I fail to see exactly.

They are quite disappointed that we are going on so soon, as the mother had quite expected we were going to stop some time, and, indeed, had given orders to have a spare kitchen that they have in their house prepared for our use, and a room for Willie during our stay; but we have to make our way as quickly as possible to Alassio to join Peg's mother and sister, who are waiting for us there: and, besides that, we really feel we have sponged on these good people quite sufficiently already; and how we can ever return their kindness we can't think, except that we have obtained a promise from the two sons that they will come and stay with us whenever they come to England, which, they think, may be some time this year. They are coming to tea with us to-morrow, and our American lady friend, through whom we first got to know them, is to come too. We said good night about eleven.

Thursday, Feb. 6.—To-day has been again fine, but still very cold. We had a visit from our American friend this morning, and repeated our invitation to tea; then we went into the town to get the necessaries for it, and also to the post.

There was a registered letter for Willie from his agent;

but the officials wouldn't give it him as he hadn't got a passport, which was a great shock to his feelings, as the letter contained all the money that he was waiting for to go on with. They wouldn't accept our passport as a guarantee, but said they must have a reference to some one in the town. Fortunately, by the greatest chance, Willie has found that the brother of his hotel proprietor was a former waiter at a hotel at Folkestone where he often walks over to from Shorncliffe and dines, and the said brother happens to be staying at the hotel now, and fell into Willie's arms with gratitude for past tips last night: so, recollecting this, Willie went off immediately and fetched both the brothers in to prove his identity, and so got his letter; but it is a warning to people when they are travelling in caravans never to be without a passport.

We tried to walk back to the Bocca by the beach: we got along some way, the walking not being particularly agreeable, as the sand is so deep and shifting, and we had to leap or otherwise circumvent two or three impediments which might have been mountain rills, or might have been drains, and perhaps were a mixture of both; luckily we got over them without any accident. After we had walked a very long way, however, the shore came to an end in an angle between the sea and the railway; naturally we couldn't go into the sea, and a high paling made of sharpened sleepers set up on end prevented us from climbing up on to the railway, not to speak of all the pains and penalties held out for those who were audacious and active enough to climb the palings on a notice-board just inside them; and we had come too far to think of going back, so we crawled along a shelf on one side of a culvert through which one of the aforementioned streams ran, and came out into somebody's garden

on the other side: thence we made our way through a gap in a hedge on to an *employés'* path on the landward side of the railway, and so past the Bocca station back into the road again; and there we found that we had only shirked about half a kilometre of it.

After lunch Monsieur N—— came out and asked us if we would like to come and see his glass-works, which we did. They were making large flagons, like Max Greger's on a very large scale, to hold the wine of the district, and we watched the whole process from the lifting out of the lump of molten glass from the furnace on the end of the blowing tube to the final deposit of the finished flagon to cool: they turn out about a thousand an hour. There are about two hundred workmen employed, and I should say the manufactory covers over three acres of ground, a siding running into it from the railway. The back premises are piled up with heaps of spoilt glass in lumps of all sorts of shapes and sizes, some of whose effects are beautiful; we have brought away two or three specimens, which will serve as paper-weights. Monsieur N—— showed us with great pride a row of umbrella pines between their house and the shore, which he says are quite a landmark for vessels as they come into Cannes harbour.

Then we gave our tea: Monsieur N—— came, but his brother was busy, or shy, we have reason to believe, like a great many of the best of their species, and Mrs O——, our American friend, with a pretty young lady friend, who brought a very nice African dog with her. James was as civil as could be, and did his best to entertain his guest, but he was very nervous, and did not reciprocate his advances but sat under the wheels and shivered, and wished for his mistress to come home all the time. Monsieur N—— ex-

cused himself very early and left, to attend, he said, to some important letters; but Mrs O—— tells us that he is only a shade less painfully shy than his brother, and though he is brimming over with goodness towards his fellow-creatures, can scarcely look any of them in the face through nervousness. She and her friend stopped till quite late, and told us all about the N——s: their whole history is one of goodness that makes one's heart warm to hear it. Madame N——, the mother, is the owner of nearly all the Bocca, and years ago, seeing the great poverty and misery amongst her tenants, she took counsel with a friend, and turned the vast quantities of sand on her foreshore to account, by starting the glass manufactory for the employment of her people. The manufactory is carried on at a loss, but she never turns any of her workpeople off, and she is deservedly blessed as a saint in every cottage in the Bocca. Then again, some years ago, when there was a great flood, and many of the people were drowned out of their homes, she turned her own house into an asylum, and sheltered and fed over thirty poor families till the trouble was over. And there is no one so poor or helpless who comes to her, but she considers their poverty or helplessness quite sufficient passport to her heart; and she has brought up her sons to be like her, and to carry on her good work after her. It really makes one feel better to know such people.

We walked part of the way back with Mrs O—— and her friend, to where they had to turn off up to their villa: then went on into the town, and after walking rapidly up and down the promenade by the sea, lounging being out of the question, turned in to dinner at the Faisan Dorée again. Then we came back to the Escargot, and about nine o'clock went in to spend the evening with Madame N—— again,

thinking to say Good-bye and thank her for all her kindness in taking us wanderers in without so much as a question as to our antecedents; but she is determined to leave nothing undone, and declares she is going to be up to-morrow in time to wish us good-speed on our journey.



CHAPTER XIX.

CAGNES—NICE—BEAULIEU—MONACO—MENTONE.

Friday, Feb. 7.—To-day was dull. We were up pretty early, and all ready to start, but our dear old Madame N—— had so set her heart on saying Good-bye to us that we stopped till she was ready. Then we made an adieu to her through her sitting-room window. The two Messieurs N—— had run away somewhere, and were not to be found; and steering our way cautiously, but safely, through the rows of bottles, we gained the road again, took our last farewell of the coachman, who was as sorry to lose us as any of them, and was only with the utmost difficulty persuaded to take a little present that we had ready for him, and at last turned our faces from about as pleasant an experience as we have had during the whole of our expedition.

The hills into the town were rather severe, but the mares were still in a good temper after all the comfort they had been enjoying so long, and gave us no trouble. Half-way along the road we met the elder Monsieur N——, who accounted for his absence by presenting Peg with a magnificent bouquet of flowers which he had tramped all the way into Cannes to get, and so we left the last of these good

people with regrets, at any rate on our own side, and we think, from what we have seen of them, on theirs as well.

All the rank and fashion of Cannes was out in the streets as we passed through. We stopped at the corner of the street leading to Willie's hotel while he got his bag, and then went on till we got to the railway, where we had to wait some time for a train to pass, and the level crossing to be opened. Meanwhile it came on to rain, and it has been going on ever since, and it is still cold. This is the third day that we have been wearing greatcoats, and that is for the first time on the whole of the journey. We are beginning to look on this "sunny south" as a bit of a fraud.

After the railway came a steepish hill with a continuation of the villas on each side, and very stony, and the mares began to sulk again; perhaps they had not realised before this that they were going to leave their late comfortable quarters for good. We fought them over two or three more moderate hills, and then the road became rather more level as it followed the sea-coast round the Golfe de Jouan, a nice little bay with villas on the slopes at the back of the road, and the Cap d'Antibes with its lighthouse shutting it in on the east, which would have been pretty in fine weather, but didn't show to advantage in the rain to-day. The road was fearfully muddy, and we all picked up a good deal of it, especially James, who, with the remains of his finery still hanging about him, looked like a decayed ballet-dancer at a village open-air fair.

We turned inland across the neck of the Cap d'Antibes, not going into the town, which looks a strongly fortified place, but skirting round it, and after that the road became uninteresting, passing over a very flat bit of country with the railway to our right, and the sea just beyond, all the

way to Cagnes, where we halted for lunch in the middle of a perfect pelt of rain opposite the station, at the Café de la Gare, where the kind-hearted *patron* came out, and insisted on our coming in to dry ourselves at his kitchen-fire. The *garçon*, as we have found before, was not nearly so ready with his welcome, and stood looking on at Joseph and myself rubbing down the mares with the greatest *nonchalance*. However, he bestirred himself a little when the time for starting, and tipping, came, and actually condescended to put one of the mares in, but he was so eager about his tip that he forgot to fasten the rein to her bridle, and we consequently nearly came to grief at starting by wheeling sharp round in the wrong direction into the verandah posts of the *café*.

The rain continued all the rest of the way, and the whole of the afternoon's journey was one continuous stand-up fight with the Missus. Every little *auberge* that she came to she made a dead stop at, and it took all our old devices, and a great many new ones, to make her go on again each time. I believe she can read hotel and *café* and *auberge* as well as we can; else how is it that it is only at places like those that she makes all this bother. The road still was not over picturesque, though there were a good many trees along it in places not running very near the sea.

We crossed the Var, the old boundary between France and Italy, but which is now shifted even out of the Department of Var, about a quarter to five, and reached the Nice *octroi* at 5.45. We had the first bother there that we have had the whole way through France, the officers insisting on our turning out the whole of our fodder-box, and making us search through all the drawers and cupboards inside, as we had told them that we had no provisions on board but a few sardines, and they would not be contented till they had

seen how many sardines. There were just two and a half when we found the box, which had slipped away somehow



behind the dishes in one of the cupboards, and all this time

they were keeping us standing in the pelting rain, and it is a mercy if the mares are no worse for it. Then we wandered through the streets for an hour—the Missus jibbing the whole way—trying to find a place to put up at, but everybody seemed to be a stranger in this place, and we were almost in despair when we at last came out on the *quais* by the river. There, in a courtyard sunk considerably below the level of the Quai St Jean, we found the Hotel du Chapeau Rouge, where every one was very civil and obliging, and willing to take us in. So here we anchored at last in a very wet, and more or less miserable, state at 7.15. We dined in the hotel, and then came back to the Escargot, where we are going to turn in early. It is only just half-past nine. Willie has a very comfortable room in the hotel. The rain is still coming down in torrents.

Saturday, Feb. 8. — To-day has been fine, but very cold again, and we have not left off our greateoats yet. James kept us awake a good deal of last night by getting under our bed and then bucking like a horse, which had the effect of a kind of juvenile earthquake, and nearly shot us out; then when I at last got out and fastened him with a short chain to the door he made such a fearful noise, that it is only wonderful that we managed to get even the broken sleep that we had. James has made himself quite at home in the courtyard, and has taken up his quarters temporarily till we go on again in a carpenter's shop opposite our door, whither he was originally attracted by the savour of a very succulent sausage that the carpenter's wife was cooking this morning for their early *déjeuner*. The mares are stabled in the hotel in a vaulted half-underground chamber, that looks very much as if it had been intended for the cellar; they are none the worse for their soaking last night.

We have been over to Monte Carlo to-day, going by train about noon and coming back in the evening. It is a lovely place, quite a little Paradise upon earth as far as nature has made it: as for the Casino and all that therein is, other and better people have discoursed plentifully about that already. We went in, having a little difficulty for a moment, as the *portier* demanded our address at Nice; but by a happy inspiration we gave Villa Escargot, which contented them, and they let us pass. We went into the gaming-rooms: I really failed to mark those dreadful evidences of human misery on the faces of those sitting round the tables; if any of them were feeling it, they were certainly concealing it remarkably well. We even went so far as to stake five francs on the roulette-tables; Peg put our joint stake down first, and won ten francs; then I staked the gained five-franc piece, and lost it; Willie staked a five-franc on his own account, and lost that too; and after that we came away, without the smallest wish to send other five-franc pieces after the lost ones; and Willie was the only loser after all. Then we sat in the hall and watched the people walking up and down, talking, and some of them working out systems; but neither here did we see the downcast brow, or the weary head, or any of those other things one has read about—either they didn't happen to be on show to-day, or else those who write about them haven't confined themselves strictly to that truth which such a good cause deserves. Gambling at Monte Carlo may not be so highly respectable a way of gaining or losing money as calculating the chances of wars and rumours of wars, and railway accidents attended with serious loss of life, on the Stock Exchange; but people should stick to facts, and not exaggerate in the heat of their righteous imaginations.

We lunched at a very expensive *café* in the gardens, paying as much for our modest meal as a week's living in the Escargot would have cost us, mares' keep and all, and then returned to the concert in the Casino. The concert-room was crowded, and we had to find places inconveniently near the big drum, but for all that the music was simply grand! Then we took another walk in the gardens,—there were no corpses hanging on the trees,—and we looked at the pigeon-shooting going on down below. I may be wrong, but to my mind there is far more to disgust one in the wanton cruelty of that sport than in the fair risking of chance against chance inside the Casino. We had an early dinner at a hotel at the bottom of the rock near the station, and got home about 7.30.

The Carnival has begun this evening with the entrance of King Carnival, who landed at the port and was conveyed round the town amidst universal acclamation to his position in the Place Massena, where he will be publicly exploded on Shrove Tuesday. All the town was out to see, and we went too. It was a grand procession, preceded by a troop of cavalry, then a lot of triumphal cars representing various arts and sciences, then a number of omnibuses containing the suite of King Carnival, a lot of grotesque figures in huge masks and white *pierrat* garments with long sleeves coming far over their hands, and his luggage, and then his Majesty himself, a huge Punchinello about five-and-twenty feet high, riding a tricycle, and then a lot of miscellaneous carriages with amateur masqueraders and masqueradresses. Two lines of firemen marched along on each side of the road the whole length of the procession carrying torches, and dropping fire about amongst the crowd in the most reckless fashion, in entire contradiction to what one generally supposes a fire-



ENTRY OF KING CARNIVAL.

man's duties to be. We walked round some way with them and then came back to our quarters: the town is still wide awake, and various ebullitions of excitement are still being let off in the shape of private exhibitions of fireworks, which we can hear from time to time; but as there is nothing really organised left for us to see, and it is now 11.30, we are going to bed.

Sunday, Feb. 9.—To-day has been still fine, but still cold. We were awoke very early this morning by an assemblage of carters, one of whom had taken upon himself to deliver a lecture on the inefficiency of our brake, with permission to the audience to handle it and prove its uselessness for themselves: which they all to the number of about twenty took advantage of, and the effect of the lever passing over the teeth of the rack was exceedingly pleasing to us, being very similar to the rattling of a small London boy's stick along the area railings.

We went to church, distinguishing ourselves by making a bad shot at the door, and so coming in through the vestry, thereby somewhat surprising the congregation, some of whom indeed stood up: and after church and lunch, not seeing that there was anything particularly more virtuous in loafing about Nice and doing nothing, than in making a little further advance towards our anxious relations at Alassio, we made a start onwards on our road, at a little after two this afternoon.

We crossed the Pont Neuf over the river, and then went straight on till we got to the outside of the town. Here we took a wrong turning, that would have taken us to the upper Corniche road; but we had resolved to take the lower one along the edge of the sea, so we had to come back again, fortunately before we had gone too far. We had

a long climb up of nearly half an hour, and then came out on a lovely view of the Mediterranean, with the lofty mountains of the coast rising straight out of it, with villas dotted here and there, and fruit and olive trees without number clothing their sides, the road and the railway running alongside on their respective terraced routes close to the edge of the shore. There were lots of carriages on the road, and lots of beggars in various stages of cripple-dom and rags. These last make a good thing of their profession, as many a gambler bound for Monte Carlo thinks he brings himself luck in proportion to the alms he gives them.

We came down on to the harbour of Villefranche, well protected by its headland on the east, and deep up to the very shore: the French squadron was lying there as we passed, so close in that we could almost have dropped a stone over on to one of the men-of-war's deck which was anchored close below us. We skirted round the harbour and through the little town of Villefranche, then left the coast to cut across the neck of the headland, and so came to Beaulieu.

Beaulieu lies up a little slope a short way off the main road, so we turned aside into the village and pulled up outside the principal hotel to see whether they could take us in there. The Beauliais, however, are not accustomed to taking in caravan people, and besides, though we disserted largely on our exceptional respectability, the hotel stables were full. They told us, however, of a *café* in a garden a little farther along the main road where they thought we might find accommodation, so we thanked them and came on. We took a short cut back into the main road, which might have resulted in a premature ending to our

journey, as when we came to its exit into the proper track, we found a huge gutter right across it, into which our fore-wheels descended with a bump which completely flattened the springs till the upper halves touched the lower, and we were thoroughly enfonc  ed for a few minutes; but a little crowd of loafers who had been hanging around an inferior sort of *caf  * close by came and very kindly lent their shoulders, and their aid and the goodness of our underworks eventually got us over the obstacle without any real accident.

We found the Beau Rivage, a nice little *caf  * in a pretty olive-garden overlooking the sea, and after a short confabulation between the proprietor and his wife, they consented to take us in as a great favour, though they took care to make us understand that they didn't as a rule encourage caravan people, their customers being in a much superior rank of life. We were established at 3.15, having only run a little over an hour to-day; but we are clear of Nice, and the journey is quite enough for a Sunday.

We restored the confidence of the *caf  tiers* to some extent by giving them a large order for coffee, and then we went out for a walk round the village, which consists mainly of hotels and villas, the latter, from their lawn-tennis grounds, evidently belonging mostly to English people; but it is a charming little place, and one above all in this sunny south which, if I was obliged, I should choose to live in. We enquired at the post for a lady friend of ours who often stays here, but she has not come out this year. After dinner we strolled about the garden and amused ourselves watching an extempore ball of Nice excursionists, of whom there were a lot over to dine, which has been going on in a kind of *salle* attached to the *caf  *,

to the strains of a rather dilapidated piano-organ. All is quiet now except for the waves beating against the rocks at the bottom of the garden. The moon on the sea is perfectly lovely. Willie and Joseph have been given rooms, also as a great favour, in the *café*.

Monday, Feb. 10.—We had a splendid night's rest, and woke up early to a lovely morning; but it has still been very cold all day, and there has been a dusty wind blowing which, if it were in England, I should say meant rain. Our bill at the *café* at Beaulieu was prodigious: we could have slept, had dinner, and put up the mares at a first-class hotel for very little over it; but the *cafetier* still impressed upon us, while we were gazing at it in wonder and almost admiration at its magnificence, that we had much to be thankful to him for the favour he had accorded us in taking us in at all, so after that we could hardly say very much.

We left Beaulieu at 9.20, and very soon regained the Corniche road, winding in and out along the line of the sea, sometimes through tunnels, sometimes over bridges, and always with the mountains rising straight up on our left and the drop down on the right to the railway below, which just had room to run along between the road and the sea. It was rather early for the daily influx of visitors to Monte Carlo, so we had the road pretty well to ourselves except for an occasional carriage going in the same direction as ourselves, with some particularly keen gambler in it pressing forward to reach the Casino in time for its opening. The professional beggars were just waking up and taking up their positions for the day, and fired a few random whines at us as we went by; not that we suppose they expected we would give them anything, but just to

get their hands in for the more serious business that was coming.

We passed below Eza, the old robber-stronghold perched up on the side of the mountain, and presently came to Monaco. Here we ought to have taken the more circuitous road round the outside of the principality, but by mistake we took the road to the right past the fortifications instead, first up, then down, a steep hill, and we found ourselves on the promenade by the sea, in the middle of Monte Carlo, with the hill leading up to the Casino in front of us, the mares obstinately refusing to take it, and all the fashionable world turning out for the day's work of amusement: a nice combination of things which we should doubt ever having been seen in Monte Carlo before.

Nothing would induce the mares, and especially the Missus, to budge forward an inch—one might almost have supposed they were showing off; and a *renfort* in a place like Monte Carlo was, of course, out of the question. A caravan there was in something of the same position as a hay-waggon would be if it had strayed into the sacred precincts of Eaton Square: it was a great question indeed how long we should be there without being fallen upon by the police. Several English people passed us, and hearing us talking their language, fully appreciated the situation, and I must say they were very kind with their advice, and under the circumstances they couldn't give us more help than that. At last a cart came by, which had been admitted into the town "on business," to collect empty siphons. The carter came and asked us if he could be of any help, but he didn't like to take his horse out for fear of the police, though he would have been perfectly ready to do so under any other circumstances; and he was passing on regretfully, when

Willie spied a rope-end hanging over the tailboard of the cart, and a brilliant idea struck him that we could at any rate, if we mightn't take the horse out, use the horse *and* the cart as a *renfort*. The soda-water man rose to the occasion. We made fast the rope to our pole and the underworks of the soda-water cart, and the plucky little soda-water horse towed us up triumphantly to the top of the hill, our great mares, who ought to have been ashamed of themselves, following very sulkily, and I believe if the rope had broken they would have allowed the Escargot to take charge and drag us all the way back again to the bottom, for they were both in a thoroughly bad temper by this time. I believe the Missus has at last, by constant nagging, corrupted the former excellent character of Mary Anne.

We reached the top, however, all right, and there parted from the soda-water cart, and turned up to get back through the gardens to the right track again. Here we had another running fight with the mares, cutting up the beautifully kept gravel of the drive in a way that had never been its lot before, and drawing down upon us a sharp rebuke from one of the garden policemen, who gave us five minutes to get out of the garden, or, he said, he would have to take us and the mares and the Escargot all into custody. Fortunately we effected the necessary exodus with about half a minute to spare, so this dire threat of the official, who stood sternly gazing at us at the junction of the roads, with his arms crossed *à la* Napoleon at St Helena, did not come off, and thus we got safely back into the adjacent State of France again.

Not very far beyond the frontier we came to the steepest hill that we had had yet, up the side of the mountain, along the coast again. Our past experience made it quite evident that we should never get up it without a *renfort*, and there

being a little sort of farmhouse place just off the road in a grove of olive-trees, we pulled up there, and went in to ask if they could provide us with the necessary article. They did keep a *renfort*, but it had gone up the hill with a wood-cart—there was a by-road just opposite the farm leading off into the wood on the slope of the mountain, and carts loaded with felled trees were constantly passing—and would not be back for an hour or so, and then it would have to have its lunch. So as the place seemed favourable, and it was getting on for the hour, we made a virtue of necessity, and stopped for ours, drawing the Escargot under the shade of the trees, out of the way of the traffic, and tethering the mares, when taken out, in the grove round the farm. There was no stable available for them, but the sun was out, and the grove was sheltered from the wind, and not more draughty than a good many of the places we have put them up in for lunch; and if we can't stand them out of doors in the sunny south, we would like to know where we are going to be able to begin. The farmhouse people sold us some eggs and milk, and we made a very comfortable lunch, exciting, we flattered ourselves, the envy of more than one party of unfortunate individuals, fettered by the trammels of conventionality, who drove by on their way from Mentone to Monte Carlo.

The *renfort* was a long time coming back, and when it did, the horse part of it was so very small, barely larger than an ordinary seaside donkey, that we had grave doubts as to whether it would be of the slightest use to us. And so it proved, for when it had had its lunch, and it had been brought out and harnessed to our pole, our mares' contempt for the scantiness of the assistance thus tendered them was so great that they utterly declined to avail themselves of it,

and stood motionless, in spite of all our persuasions of whip and voice ; and in vain did we try all our old devices of former times—though I must acknowledge that the poor little *renfort* was doing his level best all the time, and struggling away all he knew up a sort of treadmill, ploughing great furrows in the road with his hoofs, but, of course, with the weight behind him, not advancing an inch.

The *renfortier* got quite angry with the mares, and called them every equine term of reproach in the French vocabulary, asking them if they weren't ashamed of themselves for their laziness, and offering to take them out and put them inside the caravan and then set his little beast to pull the whole thing up to the top by itself, which he declared it could easily do if they weren't there hanging back like that, and doing everything to stop it from doing work that they were too lazy to do. But the mares were as impervious to his reproaches as they were to his whip, which we had given him full leave to lay on to them ; and it began to seem rather probable that we should have to stop there all night in hopes of their royal highnesses being more condescending tomorrow, when a cart came by loaded with wood, and the *charrétier* perceiving our difficulty, which indeed was making us rather a nuisance to the traffic along the road, as we were taking up a good share of it, without wasting any time on words, immediately unharnessed his team of four good-sized horses, which he was drawing tandem, after the manner of such teams, from his cart, and having removed the *renfort*, hooked them bodily on to our pole ; then gave one pistol-like crack of his whip, and the team bending to their work, carried our entire turnout to the top of the hill, our mares being obliged to move perforce, to save themselves from being pulled over, though it was very little, if any, of the

weight of the Escargot that they took on themselves. The *charretier*, as has been the case more than once before in our travels, utterly declined to take any remuneration, and returned with his team to his own cart, wishing us a safe ending to our journey; but we felt constrained to give the poor *renfortier* something for his trouble, for he had certainly done his best, and it was not his fault if he had not fulfilled his part of the bargain.

Then we went down again, which we effected very easily, as the descent was steep, and the Escargot ran down all the way by her own weight, and then there came a bit of level past a little *café* overlooking the sea, along which we ran still by our own impetus; but we were not long before we had a very good insight into the amount of work the mares were, or weren't, doing, for, from want of co-operation on their part, we were no sooner beginning to slacken speed by reason of the commencement of another hill up, than we ran straight into and got very awkwardly entangled in a telegraph-post. And even when we had, by sheer force of arm, tugged the whole thing out of that, and set the mares straight to the hill, they stood looking at it, and not moving a bit more than before, except backwards, to accommodate themselves to the spontaneous retrogression of the caravan, which, in spite of the brake, was slowly retracing the few yards that she had been carried upwards by her own rush, till we rooted some large stones out of the ditch by the side of the road—there were none anywhere near besides—and checked her for the moment in her downward career.

Then Willie ran back to the little *café* to see if he could find a *renfort*; but there was only an old woman at home, who told him that her son had taken the only pony in the place, and that was a very little one, into Mentone, and wouldn't be back

till late in the evening, so that that was no use. However, we had never really acknowledged ourselves beaten by the mares, and had only given into them so far for our own convenience, and so now we determined to make them go up this hill by themselves, which they were perfectly able to do if they liked. We accordingly took up our old accustomed positions, and started—really started this time, as the mares saw, no doubt by the determination in Willie's eye, who was leading them, that we meant business, and we advanced about ten yards: then the Missus's collar, the new Toulon one, broke, and the whole weight being thus suddenly thrown on to Mary Ann—though we have to allow that this time she had cast aside all evil influences, and was again doing her best—the caravan began slowly retrograding again, this time in a slanting direction towards the cliff, and it was only Peg's promptitude with her stone which saved the hind-wheel from going into the ditch. Here we stayed in rather an awkward position, while Willie and I got out the necessary tools and materials to try and patch up the collar as best we could, as we were occupying quite half the roadway, and there were a lot of carriages passing from time to time; but there was really plenty of room to pass driving carefully, and they all went by without a grumble, their feeling towards us being more probably pity for our predicament than anger for our obstructiveness.

But just as we had nearly finished, and it was very important that the mares should be perfectly still, for I had a bradawl perilously near the Missus's throat, an extra magnificent turn-out came down the hill with a pair of fine black horses, a coachman and a footman in smart liveries on the box, a gorgeous coat-of-arms on the panels, and inside an elderly gentleman with a young lady seated by his side both

in deep mourning. They pulled up when they had got close to us, and the elderly gentleman thundered out to us to clear out of the road and make way for his carriage to pass; but knowing perfectly well, from the fact of the other carriages having passed, that there was lots of room for them, and having in mind that every one has as good a right as any one else to the highway, provided he isn't wilfully obstructing it, we didn't see why we should run the risk of further difficulties by acceding to his demand, so replied quite politely that we couldn't very well move, if it was all the same to him, but that we would guarantee the safety of his varnish, if he would only order his coachman to drive on carefully past us, as all the other carriages had done. However, this didn't suit him, and he began to storm at us, and use language which he certainly ought to have been ashamed of using before his own companion, even if he didn't respect Peg's sex, letting alone her rank, which perhaps he might be forgiven for not grasping on the moment, saying that it was not all the same to him, and that if we didn't move out in a couple of shakes (or the French equivalent) he would get down and give us a "*grand coup de derrière*," so when it had come to that we considered it best to continue our operations and pay no further attention to him, but let himself swear himself out. Of course, if he did get down to carry out his threat, we would have to take the necessary measures for self-defence, but there was time enough to think of that.

So there we remained in a kind of dead-lock for another five minutes: we weren't going to move for him, and he was too obstinate to try the experiment which we had recommended to him, of ordering his coachman to drive, at any rate so far as he could, past us; he all the while continuing his fire of choice language, in spite of the endeavours of his companion

to restrain him, she, we fancy, beginning to realise that we weren't exactly travelling tinkers, or something of that sort. He insisted on it that we were *royaux, canaille*, and he would telegraph from Monaco to the police at Mentone, and we would soon know whom we had been obstructing, which we felt rather inclined to tell him would rather interest us than otherwise, as any one with a finer command of French slang it had never been our fortune hitherto to meet. However, we didn't, but still worked on in dignified silence.

Fortune, however, proved unkind to us in the end, for when we had finished the temporary repair of the collar, we started the mares again; but we hadn't gone two yards before the horrid thing gave way again. The wooden framing was as rotten as could be, and wouldn't hold the wire-splicing we had bound it up with. Mary Ann made a gallant effort to keep her ground, but it was no use; the incline was too steep, and the Escargot receded again, this time with both the near wheels in the ditch, and our reviler drove by triumphant, though it was no victory of his own gaining.

We were literally in a hole now, well enfoncéed in the mud at the bottom of the ditch, one collar hopelessly broken, and no prospect of a *renfort*, for the traffic on this road was not of the kind that we could very well expect to get a horse from it to help pull us out of our trouble. Just then a carriage came by, and, to our surprise, we saw sitting in it a lady who is our next-door neighbour at home. She made her coachman pull up, and was good enough to recognise us, though by this time Willie and I were by no means as respectable as we might be, as we had a good deal of the mud out of the ditch over us; but we could hardly ask her to lend us a horse, as she was only in a hired carriage, so we made light of our difficulty to her, and after she had given us a

summary of home news, for she had only lately come out from there, she went on her way. It was a pleasant though rather an unfortunate meeting, as she may take the impression home to our friends that we have been habitually in the ditch on our way across France, which, from their anticipatory lamentations over the whole expedition, they will probably be quite ready to believe.

But now something had to be done, so we first took off the broken collar and replaced it with one of our old ones, which fortunately we didn't give the Toulon saddler as part payment, as he wouldn't allow us anything like their worth. Then we cast about for some way to get out of the ditch. Presently a body of *cantonniers* came by on their way to work farther up the hill. Willie and I waylaid them, and offered them large sums if they would come and help us to shove; but they were the slaves of duty, and said they could do nothing without the consent of their chief, who was higher up the hill round the corner. However, they were only going to work a very little farther along, so if we liked to go and ask him, they would be quite close to come back and help us when we had got his leave. I ran on up the hill, but there was no chief *cantonnier* visible; but there *was* a small *café*, and my next conjecture that he would be very likely refreshing himself in there proved correct.

I got the necessary consent, and ran back to the caravan, picking up the *cantonniers* on the way, and taking them along with me. I found our little company now increased by a good-natured-looking Englishman, who had come along on his way from Monte Carlo to Mentone on foot, and seeing fellow-countrymen in distress, was standing by to see if he could be of any help; also a little Frenchman, who had come by in a little basket pony-carriage, and had also stopped to help us, if

possible. From him Willie had learnt the somewhat startling news that our late adversary was the Prince of Monaco. We hereby unanimously place it on record, that though we may occasionally, though very rarely, have met with coldness from the various sorts and conditions of people whom we have come across on our journey, the only rudeness and abuse that we have experienced has been from a man who considers himself one of the crowned heads of Europe. We are upholders of royalty by tradition and principle, but if there were more of these petty potentates about with his manners, even making all allowances for his taking us for vagrants, we would all soon degenerate into out-and-out Radicals.

Our little Frenchman regretted that his pony could not be of any use to us, but while the rest of us were occupying ourselves over the measures for extricating the Escargot from the ditch, he busied himself stopping all the empty carriages and carts that came by, and trying to get them to lend us a horse for a *renfort*. He was a native of Mentone, he told us, and knew a great many of the hack-drivers and carters personally; but they all with one accord excused themselves from helping us, and our friend was just on the point in his despair of making a bargain in our behalf to get a bullock, which would perhaps have been even a shade less dignified than the soda-water cart, to *renforcer* us, when, by great good luck, a friend of his came by, who consented as a favour to him to do us the required service. Meanwhile we and the *contonniers* had been working at the embedded wheels: we had lifted the hind one up to the road-level with the jack, and then, by getting between the body and the rock at the side of the road, had swung it on to the firm ground; then we tried the same manœuvre with the front-wheel,

but there was not sufficient space to get the jack under, so we had to devise some other mechanical means.

After much thought, the inclined plane, as taught by the great Hamblin Smith in his 'Elementary Mechanics,' suggested itself. We had some slips of board in the fodder-box, and placing the one end of one as far as it would go in the mud under the sunken wheel, we built it up by successively higher supports of loose pieces of rock till the other end came up to the height of the road. Then we harnessed on the fly horse, and whipped up the mares, while the *cantonniers* and the Englishman and the Frenchman, and all of us who weren't engaged with the mares, shoved with all our might. The mares were willing enough now, for they had been getting rather chilly with standing still all this time: the plank cracked, and the stone supports sank into the mud to a certain extent; but the wheel had now got something solid to pass over, and the tire being raised up an appreciable distance, bit into the hard earth at the side of the ditch and climbed the rest for itself, and we were clear. The *cantonniers* gave a great shout, and without waiting, Joseph, who was driving from the footboard, dashed away without stopping to the top of the hill, leaving Willie and me and the other Englishman to pick up the jack and all the other appliances we had been using, and toil after the Escargot, but it was the wisest thing he could have done, as it put us out of any further immediate risk.

We rewarded the *cantonniers* quite to their satisfaction, and thanked our little Frenchman, who remained at the bottom to keep guard over the dishorsed fly: he told us with tears in his eyes, good little man, that he was as glad as we were at our success, for he had been in a road accident himself some years ago, and had vowed that he would never

thereafter pass any one in similar distress without at any rate doing all he could to help them. We offered our English friend a lift into Mentone, but he declined, as he said he had to take exercise for his health, and never liked to let himself off, so the only way we could show our gratitude was by giving him some tea, which Peg, with a coolness under exciting circumstances which did her credit, had been preparing all the time that we had been sticking, and now had ready, and a brush, which after his labours at the wheels he was wanting just as much as we, indeed more, because his clothes mattered, and then we left him trudging contentedly behind.

The rest of the way into Mentone was all down-hill, so we were soon in the town, and passing along the Promenades, came out on the front by the sea. We found a *remise*, but when we tried to go in, the gate was too narrow; so seeing another caravan encamped in a large open square at the east end of the town, we formed ourselves into a deputation and went to the police-office to ask if we might locate ourselves there too. They made no difficulty about it, and so we established ourselves here for our last night in France, at 5.30.

We have been into the town, of which the part that we have seen is evidently the old one, with narrow streets paved with large flags like an Italian town, as, after all, this was not so very many years ago. The people are more Italian-looking than French. The mares are in the stables of the *remise* we first tried. Willie and Joseph have found rooms in a hotel not far down the street leading off the square. We are just opposite the *douane*, and have been in to show our papers and prepare the authorities there for the great draught we are going to make on their official purse tomorrow. The chief *douanier* is a very civil man, and took

great interest in our account of our travels, which he insisted on our giving him. James is chasing fowls round the square.

The sky is clouding over : we fear we shall have rain to-morrow.



CHAPTER XX.

OVER PONT ST LOUIS INTO ITALY—VENTIMIGLIA—SAN REMO.

Tuesday, Feb. 11.—To-day has been cold and squally, with incessant rain, from the first thing this morning to the moment of writing, 10.45 P.M.: we are now in Italy, but we can't say we have had reason to be impressed with its brightness and beauty as yet, as much as we might expect to have been from all we have read about it.

We were up early this morning, and, securely fortified in the interior of mackintoshes, were superintending and assisting the *douanier* officers in their identification of the Escargot as the one with which we entered the country—it is so likely that we should have evolved a different one out of our inner consciousness on our way through—with a view to their returning us, if they were satisfied on that score, the deposit money which we paid at our disembarkation at Bordeaux. Our *renseignements* had been drawn up most carefully at the other end; but there was one *douanier*, the youngest and it is to be presumed the latest joined, from the zeal which he endeavoured to show in the carrying out of his duties, who raised two points of objection: one that the Escargot was described as having a canvas covering when we passed

through the Bordeaux *douane*, and the other that there was an error of three centimetres in the measurement across our fodder-box; and having had experience of the red tapeism of foreign officialdom before, we were rather anticipating some little trouble. We might get over the canvas covering difficulty by putting it on again for the occasion, but the three centimetres extra that had been allowed us at Bordeaux couldn't very well be put on again.

However, we had won a friend at court in the person of the head *douanier*, during our preliminary interview with him last night, and when the young subordinate laid his report before him, panting with excitement over the service he had done to the Republic in thus bringing to light this dastardly attempt to cheat the revenue, his chief sat on him with a force that ought to have squashed his patriotic fervour out of him for a long time to come. We told him we could produce the canvas covering if desired, on which he turned on the cowering wretch with a scornful inquiry why he took everything for granted without any examination into facts; as for the three centimetres, that was very likely owing to some defect in his own eyesight. Then, turning to us, he apologised for there having been any examination at all, but it was always a mere matter of form; and he had the pleasure of returning us our money, which he had all ready in a drawer just beneath his hand as he sat at the table. We bade him a hearty Good-bye, and walked proudly forth, I with more solid gold in my pocket than I think I have ever had before at one time, 940 francs in all.

Meanwhile Joseph had been finding a *renfort* to take us up the hill out of Mentone and over the frontier, and in this he had no difficulty, except as regarded the choice of one of the twenty or so who offered themselves, and all at the same

price; and when we had hardened our hearts and chosen the one he had originally found at the *remise* where the mares had put up last night, and which we thought deserved some sort of preference, all things else being equal, as they were, all the others hung about for some time, on the chance of our changing our minds. I don't understand why *renforts* should be so plentiful in Mentone.

Everything therefore was ready by half-past ten, and we were just on the point of putting the mares to and starting, when Joseph suddenly found that he had lost the keys of the establishment, and though we instituted a rigorous search for them, they were nowhere to be found. It was necessary to-day of all days to have them ready to open everything for the Italian *douane*, so there was nothing to do but to take off one of the cupboard locks, which is fortunately like all the other locks and having, after much searching, found a blacksmith, set him to work to make a new key then and there, while we were standing over him to see that he made it in as short a time as possible. And then, to put the climax on his offence, while we were waiting, and the new key was all but finished, up ran Master Joseph to the blacksmith's, and announced that he had found the lost ones after all in his overcoat pocket. He had not the smallest right to put them there, as we have made it a most rigid rule that, when not in use, they are always to be hung on their proper nail on the side of the hanging cupboard, but once he had infringed this rule, his next downward step—viz., the losing them—was almost inevitable, for when he turned his pockets out to show us how it had happened—he seemed perfectly unconscious of the enormity of his offence—he could have given an English private schoolboy points as to the variety of their contents, and walked in an easy first. We accordingly

countermanded the new key, contenting the blacksmith with something for his trouble ; but I greatly regret that we didn't have the other key finished, as it would always have done to fall back upon, and, as it was, it was by that time so late that we found it not worth while starting till after we had lunched.

We cleverly finished up every morsel of provisions that we had in the caravan, except our tea, as we had dreadful anticipations of the exactingness of the Italian *douane*, and at last at two we got under weigh, the *renfort*, which had been waiting patiently in the rain all this time, trying to browse on the sand of the square, starting a little ahead of us, as it was not worth while putting it to for the first bit of level out of Mentone. We had to take a *douanier* from the headquarters opposite with us to see us to the frontier, and that, now we had got our money back, we did not take any side-turning back into France again. He was a very taciturn individual, and never spoke a word the whole time he was on board, not even accepting our invitation to go inside out of the rain, but preferring to get wet outside on the footboard.

Five minutes' run brought us to the *sous-douane* post at the bottom of the hill into Italy, and there we had to stop a good twenty minutes while they measured and otherwise identified the mares in case we should ever bring them back into France again, as, of course, they being natives, they would be exempt from duty, James and I having meanwhile rather the best of it, for we got a good warm at the open fire inside the office. But at last they handed me the identification paper, and bidding the last French official we shall see Good-bye, we hitched on the *renfort*, and began the ascent. A few minutes' climb brought us to Pont St Louis,

over the ravine which makes a natural crack between the two countries, and we were in *la bella Italia* at three o'clock precisely.

A hundred yards farther we came to the Italian *douane*, and an officer running out from the guardhouse in a great fuss commanded us to stop, which, of course, we had always intended to do. He was good enough, however, to let us go on a few yards beyond, to get on to a more level part of the road, otherwise we might have gradually receded into France again, and he would have been baulked of his pay. Then he marched me off into the office, where I found three *douaniers* of a superior kind seated at a table prepared to question me; but as they couldn't speak a word of English or French, and I couldn't speak any Italian, the proposed cross-examination was not an unprecedented success. However, I constantly repeated my signs to them that they had better come out and see the caravan for themselves, and at last the smallest and most intelligent of the three grasped my meaning, and taking his umbrella came out accordingly. He was very fat, and didn't at all seem to relish the idea of climbing up inside, but duty called him, so we eventually got him up, Willie hauling at his arms from above, while I shoved him up from beneath, and he stood, very proud of his feat, but somewhat dishevelled, on the footboard.

We invited him in, but he only came as far as the door. Then we understood him to exclaim that it was all very beautiful, and he stood so lost in admiration at the whole arrangement of the interior, that though we made every demonstration of readiness to open anything and everything he liked for his inspection, he paid no attention to us, and presently let himself cautiously down to the ground again, when, after walking solemnly round the whole of our premises,

he stationed himself directly behind the Escargot, and stood in the rain turning over in his mind whether it ought to be described as a *carossa* or a *vettura*. I knew what those words meant, and I gathered from the interrogative way in which he repeatedly addressed them to me, that on the decision depended in one way or the other the amount of duty we should have to pay; but I couldn't tell which would be the most advantageous classification, and, of course, I wasn't going to give myself away. So after waiting a little longer, at the end of which he didn't seem any nearer making up his mind, I touched him politely on the arm, and suggested that it would be better to go into the office out of the rain, and finish thinking it out there.

He took the suggestion, and we adjourned into the room again, where I accommodated myself with a chair, while my little friend broached the knotty point to his comrades, and they sat debating it over cigars and a bottle of St Estephe, which one of them kept in his desk cupboard. It soon began to grow dark, and as the mares were taking no good standing out in the rain, and I could see that they had considerably wandered off the point, I began to grow impatient, and presumptuously interrupted their deliberations with the proposition—in English, which under the circumstances was quite as good as French, and, indeed, had the advantage over the latter tongue that I could speak it more fluently—that they should describe the Escargot as an omnibus. This recalled them to the fact of my existence, and seizing on this as a happy inspiration, they instantly entered it as their own in the official report that they now set to work seriously to draw up; but even then they couldn't decide what duty they ought to charge me for it, and tried to pump me as to what I had paid when I entered France. Of course, I was

not quite so idiotic as to tell them that, and preserved a discreet silence. So they again deliberated, and then proceeded to write out a long description of the Escargot and the mares in triplicate, sending out the subordinate who had first challenged us from time to time to collect the necessary details for an accurate word-picture.

After another three-quarters of an hour's hard writing, interrupted at intervals by one or other of them having difficulty over the spelling of some word, or to look up something in the Customs Statute Book, they at last completed their task, and then calling me to the table, made me understand that I was to pay 185 francs for the whole thing—by which we have made a very fair profit on the exchange of countries—but that I must engage to be out of the country in fifty days on pain of forfeiture of the deposit—which is no great hardship, as it can only be by the merest accident that we shan't—and we must submit to having seals placed on the caravan, which must not be moved except by the *douaniers* at Genoa, where I told them I intended to re-embark the Escargot for England. I had no objection to offer to this, so I paid the money down, and got my new identification papers, and then went out again to the Escargot, accompanied by the subordinate carrying a lantern, for it was pitch-dark by this time, and a pair of pincers and a brazier, which gave him the appearance of some ancient torturer of the middle ages.

I found the others had been consoling themselves by making and drinking tea, which was a little riling, as, if I had only known, I might just as well have come out and joined them, instead of kicking my heels in the office all that time; though, perhaps, if I had, the *douaniers* might have forgotten about me altogether. The subordinate was some

time making up his mind where to put the seals: he had lots to spare, and was more than half inclined to put them everywhere, on the mares and ourselves included; but we finally persuaded him to hang one just under the eaves outside, over the footboard, and the other on the ventilator, just inside the door. Then we bade him good evening, and summoning the *renfort*, who had been sitting contentedly all this time under the bank at the side of the road smoking innumerable imported cigarettes in the most barefaced defiance of the *douane*, we proceeded to the top of the hill, and there parted from the *renfort*, remunerating him to an extent that was quite beyond his expectations, and was certainly out of all proportion to the distance he had brought us; but he quite deserved it, as he had been with us much longer than any other *renfort* had been before.

We had scarcely started on our own account when a tremendous thunderstorm broke upon us. What sort of a road we have come along we know not, except that in places there were trees on both sides, and in other places there were heavy stones, on which we all but stuck, and had to get certain passing Italians to help us to shove over, for which, in spite of their evident desire to get home as soon as possible, they demanded payment; and they valued their services at a very high rate of payment too. And we seemed to pass two or three villages; but the thunder and lightning continued, and we pushed on, the mares completely frightened out of all their old obstinacy, till at last, to our great joy, we came upon a flickering oil-lamp, and a man who was standing under it, for no other ostensible purpose but to enjoy the wet weather, replied to our interrogative, "Ventimiglia?" in the affirmative.

There was a steep hill down in front of us, which, in the

scanty light of the oil-lamps, looked very slippery and not particularly inviting, so our new acquaintance seeming to intimate that we could find accommodation off to the left, we followed him along there; and ploughing our way through a miserable bit of road under a kind of incipient avenue of trees, we came to an old archway, which looked as if it once might have been an old gate into the upper part of the town, and found just inside it a little square space, with narrow alleys branching out of it in all directions. Our guide knocked at the door of one of the houses, and a tall bandit-looking Italian came out, who, in reply to something our guide said to him, signed to us to come along with him. I got down, and he led me up one of the alleys, and then up a half-slope, half-stair, off that to a little tumble-down building, where there was a very small stable, scarcely large enough for one small horse of the country, and certainly not for our mares; so I made signs of regret that it wouldn't do, and as after we had returned to the rest of the party, and he had talked some more to our guide, it didn't appear that he had anything better to offer us in that part of the town, we had to follow our friend sorrowfully back along the muddy avenue, and turn down the hill into the lower part of the town after all.

It was a tremendously steep hill, and quite as slippery as it had looked, and we had to keep the shoe on the whole way down, the Italian and myself walking on in front with the hurricane-lantern to guide Willie, who was driving, round the corners. The road, as far as we could make out in the darkness, seemed to run down the side of the hill, with the main part of the town rising off it to the left. At the bottom we turned to the right, and crossed a long bridge over a torrent; then turned to the right again, and our guide

led us through a gate in a high wall into a courtyard, which was then ankle-deep in water, but there was—oh joy!—a hotel on the other side of it. I went inside with our friend, and we found a dirty-looking man about, to whom we addressed ourselves, the other man, of course, doing all the talking. The *garçon*, as he proved to be, consented to our putting up there, and we accordingly drew up in front of the hotel door, and getting the mares out as quickly as possible, led them away to the stables, where Joseph and the *garçon* set to work to rub them down and otherwise endeavour to counteract the evil effects of their exposure to the rain: we were all stowed at 7.15.

Then we suddenly missed James! Peg and Willie had thought he was running along outside with me, and I had thought that he was inside; and now he was nowhere to be found. Great was our consternation,—the last time we had seen him was just before we had tried at the place at the top of the hill; but he had probably missed us in the dark, and goodness knew where he might be wandering at that moment: perhaps he was starting following the wrong tracks of the Escargot back along the course we had come from the *douane*, and every minute was placing a greater distance between him and us. The only thing to be done was to go back to where he had been last seen. I can't say I had much hope, but in a case like the loss of James every chance must be tried; so I left Willie in charge, and taking his mackintosh, which was rather drier than mine, and the hurricane-lantern, I started off up the hill again in company with our Italian friend, whom we had rewarded for his services quite to his satisfaction. He was very keen on my coming up by a short cut with him into the upper part of the town—I don't think he quite understood the reason for

my taking this extraordinary walk all the way back again—but as his chief inducement to my doing so appeared to be that we might have a drink together, for which I didn't at all in my present state of anxiety feel disposed, I declined the kindness, and so we eventually parted at the beginning of the hill.

Then I toiled up alone till I got to the same little square where we had been before, and knocked at the door whence the owner of the stable had come out. A voice said "*Entrata,*" and I opened the door; a flight of steps led down to a room with an earthen floor considerably below the level of the street outside, where the bandit and his family were having supper round a deal table. They were rather surprised at my reappearance, but appeared friendly disposed, and greeted me with smiles, making signs for me to come in out of the wet. I remained, however, where I was, and tried to make them understand in a mixture of French and Latin what I wanted, till they at last grasped my meaning; but, alas! James was not with them: I had had a last lurking hope that perhaps he had slipped in while we were stopping there before. I was just on the point of thanking them and going on to search vaguely about in the immediate neighbourhood, when I felt a cold wet thing being poked into my hand: I turned round, and there was James! quite as glad to see me as I was to see him. The clever doggie had known that we would not go on without making a search for him, so, when he found he had missed us, had just sat down and waited for some one to come back for him. I took him back, and great was the rejoicing in the *Escargot* at his return, all dirty as he was: we even forgot to scold him for missing us.

We have had a sort of scratch dinner in the hotel, the good

people therein giving us some of their own meal, as there being no other visitors they had nothing cooked but what they were going to have themselves. The maes are doing very nicely, and I don't think are any the worse for their soaking. Willie and Joseph have got beds in the hotel. We have all taken stiff glasses of hot brandy-and-water to take away the effects of our long cold wet day, and now are going to turn in to sleep the sleep of the righteous.

Wednesday, Feb. 12.—To-day has been still cold, but the rain of yesterday has stopped, and it has been even quite bright and sunny at times throughout the day.

We were very late up this morning; indeed we were only aroused even at 9.45 by the *garçon* of the hotel at Ventimiglia knocking at our door to tell us that the police were outside demanding an instant interview, so I hurried on my clothes, and going out to the footboard found two gendarmes in all their war-paint, who began talking at me very fast. Concluding they wanted our papers, I went inside again and fetched out our passport, with the French translation that we had made at Bordeaux attached to it, and handed it down to them, explaining briefly—in one word, as a matter of fact—that we were *Inglese*. They gazed steadfastly at both the documents for some time, pretending they could read them, but of course they couldn't read either of the languages, and then the one who had the English version studied the royal arms at the top very carefully, and they being in his opinion all right, showed them to his comrade: they both took off their hats to them, and handed back the papers to me with signs that they were satisfied, so I took off my hat too, and the interview was over.

The courtyard, which was like a young lake when we came in last night, was quite dried up this morning, but it was

wonderful what an amount of wet we absorbed in the Escargot in the course of yesterday. Mats, linoleum, towels, curtains, everything that could get damp had got damp, except, fortunately, the bedclothes; but even there the plaid that covers them over all day was damp through one fold of it. This feeling of things being very uncomfortable, we spent our morning drying them, hanging them out on points of vantage all along the side of the Escargot towards the sun, till Peg said we looked like a travelling second-hand clothes-shop; while at the same time we lighted all our stoves inside and got two cross-currents of fresh air through by opening all the doors and windows to dry the wood-work thoroughly; and when we had arranged all this, we sat on the footboard in a row, and caught the passing bursts of sunshine to dry ourselves. We had a very good view of Ventimiglia lying on the side of the hill across the river, the houses looking as if they were all massed one on the top of each other, with no particular streets between them. The town-hall is a large white building, with rows of little windows which make it look like a house of correction; and had a little turret to it in which there was a clock that seemed to be constantly striking just as it felt inclined. Of course we had to put our clock back about forty minutes to-day, and begin working that amount of time all over again.

We hauled in all our things, and left Ventimiglia at 12.45 this morning: we had about four kilometres over a very narrow and a very vile road—the worst road we have had in France wasn't in it with this bit—and it lay over a very flat bit of country between the hills and the sea, probably from the nature of the soil alluvial deposit, till we came to Bordighera, a town very like Ventimiglia, on the side of a hill which here came down to the sea again.

We saw lots of palms: Bordighera enjoys the monopoly of supplying these to Rome on Palm-Sunday as a reward for the promptness of a mariner from here, at the time of raising the obelisk in front of St Peter's, in calling out to wet the ropes just at the time when they were stretching and threatening to let the obelisk down again.

Then we followed the coast to Ospedaletti, which is, we believe, considered the rising watering-place of the Riviera, but at present doesn't seem to have advanced very far in the rising process, as there was just the old town with the road running along the beach between it and the sea, with another of those main drains running across it that we have always found so good for our springs; and a railway-station, where there was one Englishman waiting for a fly—and he must have been waiting some time, as we had come along the railway more or less the whole way, and hadn't seen a train pass either way. Behind the station was a half-finished marine parade, and one hotel on the side of the hill; but a more dead-alive place I don't think it has ever been my fortune to come across—that is, in the sea-side line.

After Ospedaletti, we had a long climb over the Capo di Nero, an ascent as big as the one we had yesterday out of France, and we had no *renfort* this time. We had a series of skirmishing the whole way up with the Missus, who didn't at all like passing Ospedaletti: she had been talking to the other horses in the Ventimiglia stables, and had picked up all the Italian terms for places where she could put up, so that we have gained very little by bringing her away from her native language; but at last we arrived at San Remo about four o'clock, and after one vain attempt to put up at the Hotel de Grande Bretagne, which was frustrated

by the narrowness of the entrance, we found a little courtyard up a narrow alley at the back of the houses off the main street, where we finally established ourselves for the night. The alley is very steep, and paved with flags, which make it difficult for the mares to get any foothold, and both it and the courtyard are barely wide enough to let the Escargot in. We shall have to back all the way out again to-morrow. And we have completely imprisoned the Oneglia diligence, which lives here: it is only to be hoped devoutly that it won't want to leave to-morrow before we do, as there may be a row, and these Italians are so quick-tempered.

We have been for a walk this afternoon into the public gardens, and then up into the old part of the town, which gives one much the sort of sensation that I should imagine walking about inside a rabbit-warren would. It is all on the side of the hill, and the streets are as often as not mere staircases,—they keep a special kind of performing mules here, which can go up and down stairs like Christians, —and the houses seem to have been built anyhow, leaving the streets to find their way between them as best they could, which makes them exactly like a maze, and we are more than surprised that we managed to get out of them without having to ask the way more than once or twice. The people, on the first *coup d'œil*, are very picturesque; but they are more pleasant to look at, for more reasons than one, from a slight distance.

We dined out this evening at a *café* going down towards the station. After dinner, a band of Neapolitan singers came in to amuse the company: they played a good many well-known Italian airs; and then perceiving our nationality, proceeded to give a selection of English popular airs

of some ages back, such as "Champagne Charlie," "Tommy Dodd," and "Paddle your own Canoe," which greatly delighted the Italian portion of the company, not to speak of the intended compliment to ourselves, which we highly appreciated. Their chief told us, when he came round with the hat, that he had been over to England to the Italian Exhibition: though where he had picked up these antiquated airs, unless he had been studying at the British Museum, I can't think.



CHAPTER XXI.

ONEGLIA—ALASSIO AT LAST.

Thursday, Feb. 13.—To-day has been fine but still very cold. We are beginning to seriously doubt the wisdom of sending invalids to winter in the Riviera, as the climate seems to be just as treacherous as England—bright sun and cutting

east winds, and the houses are far less well adapted for cold weather.

The police were after us early this morning again ; but this time it was about James, who after making a fearful noise at an early hour this morning, to the complete ruination of any satisfactory rest on our part, when I at last turned him out, had gone for a walk on his own account into the town, and had promptly been arrested and taken off to prison for not having a muzzle. It was lucky that the stable proprietor could speak French, as otherwise we might not have been able to learn the entire truth about James, and he might have been languishing in prison for the rest of his days. The stable proprietor explained that the policeman had come round to know if I wished to redeem James ; so of course I hurriedly dressed, and having learnt from our friend that I must go to the commissary of police, started off there immediately with Joseph. The chief police-station lay in the middle of the labyrinthine old town, and if it hadn't been for the kindness of a native, who guided us the whole way, I don't think we should ever have got there. I asked a policeman who was standing at the door where I ought to go, and he said we must go to the Mairie, so we had to start off again in search of that, and when we had at last stumbled upon it by accident, another policeman who was standing at that door sent us all the way back to the police-station.

This time we asked nobody's advice, but made our way into a room where there was a policeman sitting at a desk at each end of the room, and other policemen put away on benches all round the walls till they were wanted. We walked boldly up to the desk at the other end of the room, and without waiting to be asked, poured forth our story of James's loss and how we had come to ransom him to

the officer sitting there. When we had finished, he intimated that he hadn't understood a word we had said, and relegated us to the other official at the other end. This man was more intelligent, being perhaps retained there for the use of benighted foreigners, and when I had paid him down 2 francs 50 centimes, he wrote something on a piece of paper, and giving it to me, told us to follow a policeman, into whose charge he put us.

We followed the policeman into the back premises of the police-station, where we found a miserable sort of ratecatcher-looking individual with a long stick with a noose at the end sitting asleep on a bench. Our conductor woke him and showed him our bit of paper, on which he arose and beckoned us to come with him, which we did down to the Mole, he taking us through the most fashionable parts of San Remo, as if purposely to bring us to shame should we happen to meet any one of our more respectable friends who might chance to be at San Remo while we were in his company. Arrived at the Mole, he unlocked the door of a vault constructed on the landward side of it, and there we saw James, not in the least unhappy, but playing with a fox-terrier puppy who had been sharing his fate, and not apparently in the least hurry to come along with us. However, we were too glad to think we had saved him from the fate which the nearness of the harbour vividly suggested had we not shortly come to his relief, to scold him much, so we put him at once on the chain and brought him home, giving the dog-catcher a little something for his trouble, for after all he had only been doing his duty.

We eventually left San Remo at 10.55, and continued our way all along the sea the whole way from San Remo to Alassio, sometimes along flat bits of shore, especially

about the villages and towns, sometimes creeping round the headlands along a sort of shelf hewn out in the side of the cliff, with the precipice sheer down to the sea from three to six hundred feet below: passing through Taggia, Riva, San Stefano, San Lorenzo, Porto Maurizio, Oneglia, Diano Marina, and Andorra. We have done forty-five kilometres to-day, our longest day's journey; and we have had more adventures crowded into it than we have ever had in any day's journey yet. Even in themselves the little towns here, apart from any external accessories, were quite little adventures, as the streets through which we passed were so narrow that there was just a pleasing amount of exciting doubt whether we should get through, and indeed, if it hadn't been for the softness of the material of which the houses were built, or maybe it was the countless layers of whitewash that have been put on them since they were built many centuries ago, we should have stuck in a great many places by reason of the width of our axles. As it was, we have left furrows along the walls on each side in one part or other of almost every town or village we have passed to-day.

And then, for the more extraordinary adventures. The first was at San Stefano, where they are at last waking up to the fact that after all it might be advisable to rebuild their houses, and not go on living any longer in the wooden barracks which the Government was kind enough to put up for them, after the earthquake. Just at the entrance to the town, they had erected a scaffolding round one of the ruined houses, and shored it up by beams reaching across the street to the wall of the opposite house, in case lest, in the course of their repairing, they might bring down the whole building with a run; and having got so far, the re-

storers were sitting on a heap of *débris* smoking cigarettes and admiring their handiwork. When we came up to this, it looked rather questionable whether the shoring wasn't placed too low for us to go under; but as there was no other way round, and one would naturally suppose, before one knew the habits of Italians very well, that they would take care to allow, even if it was only just enough, room for an ordinary hay-cart to go underneath, which would be just about the height of the roof of the Escargot, we gave them the benefit of the doubt, and drove the mares very slowly and carefully under the beam. But not quite slowly enough, as it proved: the beam sloped to such an extent that, though the highest point of our roof would have cleared it, the point of the cave farthest from the ruined building didn't, and though the shock was apparently a very slight one, either the weight of the Escargot told, or else the shoring was a careless piece of work, and before we knew where we were, the whole beam was slithering down between the two walls on to the backs of the mares.

Fortunately the other end nearest the ruin reached the ground first, and our end—*i.e.*, the one we had knocked—followed it more slowly down the opposite wall. Willie and I both rushed to that end of the footboard and got our shoulders under the beam, so that, resting as it did there slantindicularly, we saved it from doing more than just graze the Missus's back, and there we stood for two or three minutes, until the workmen had leisurely got up, and thrown away their cigarettes, and come to the grounded end of the beam; after which they took the weight at that end, while Willie and I slowly walked our end across to the other end of the footboard and handed it down to them, to lay under the wall of the ruin till we had passed. It was fortunate

that the mares behaved so admirably, as if they had taken fright and moved on, we must have let the beam drop on their backs, and very likely have injured them very severely: as it was, there was just the smallest bit of hair rubbed off the Missus's shoulder. The amusing thing was the perfect calmness of the workmen, whose only anxiety at all was in the direction of getting something out of us for their trouble; but mere justice prevented us from giving them that, and we drove on, leaving them grumbling, and very likely they have put back the beam in exactly the same position—that is, if they have been able to raise the necessary energy.

By the way, talking of earthquakes, we have been coming through traces of its destroying path the whole way to-day, every place we have passed having been more or less knocked about by it, especially Diano Marina, which we passed this afternoon, which was the centre of it, and of which indeed there is scarcely a whole house left: a great many standing with the whole of one side come bodily away, like when one opens the front of a child's doll's house, and so that we could see the pictures still hanging on the walls in some of them. The Government has built wooden barracks for temporary residences for the inhabitants of all the places that suffered, till they can build their houses up again; but it is thoroughly characteristic of the Italians that the majority of them are in not the smallest hurry to rebuild, being perfectly content to pig up in the barracks, and I dare say, if pressure isn't put on them, they will go on living in them for the rest of their lives.

The second adventure was at Oneglia, a larger town than the others, about half-way, where we stopped for lunch. A great misfortune there befell us in the shape of the loss of our keys, and altogether this time, as Joseph dropped them

out of his waistcoat pocket—where as usual he oughtn't to have been carrying them—down the hotel well, at which he was stooping over to see his reflection in the water. It is a most unfortunate thing that we didn't have the duplicate pair that we were having made at Mentone finished, but still it was lucky that we lost them on the last day of the journey.

We had to get a *renfort* out of Oneglia, as there was a hill up out of it over the Capo Buta, which took us three-quarters of an hour to climb up. It took us exactly twelve minutes to run down the other side. When we got to Cervo, it was beginning to get very near sundown, and we still had a long way to go; but we were resolved to get to Alassio to-night, so we climbed up on to the side of the cliffs again and came on, round headland after headland, hoping each one was going to be the last. Night, however, had set well in when we at last rounded Capo Mele, and a wayfarer, to whom we shouted as we passed, replied that *questa qui*, which is about as much Italian as we have picked up to be sure of as yet, down below there was Laigneglia and Alassio; but he added something else which we did not understand, till we had got a little farther down the last slope, when we only just pulled up in time to avoid crashing into our third adventure. This consisted of a huge rock which had been blasted out of the cliff, and was now lying comfortably more than half-way across the road, so that there would have been scarcely room for an ordinary carriage to pass between it and the parapet of the road, let alone the Escargot; and to make matters worse, for even the hypothetical ordinary carriage, there were heaps and heaps of *débris* of rock piled up against the parapet, reducing the available roadway to a mere footpath. And as might have been expected, the

quarrymen, having done so much, were just putting their tools together and were starting to go home. Willie and I ran forward and expostulated with them, but without effect for some time. They coolly seemed to think that since we had been stupid enough to get there, we had better stop there all night ; but being so near our destination, we were reckless, and went on increasing our promises of reward till at last we touched the head-quarryman's heart, and he having whistled back as many of his subordinates as had not tramped out of hearing, we set to work to surmount the obstacle.

First we ran the Escargot forward as far as she would go, to take her measure for the space that would be required : then two of the men climbed up on to the top of the rock, and with very inadequate tools began pecking away at it to make room for the roof of the Escargot to pass, while two others pecked at it down below to make room for the wheels, and the rest of us meanwhile worked all we knew to heave the smaller *débris* on the other side of the road over the parapet down to the shore below. It was lucky, as one quarryman, who was more facetious than the rest, and likewise spoke a little broken French, remarked, that there were no lovers walking along down there.

This went on about an hour and a half. We had taken the mares out, as they were beginning to get a little fidgety from the cold, and Joseph was leading them up and down a little farther down the road. Every now and then we ran the Escargot a little forward by hand, to see how much more cutting was wanted, and at last there were only about three inches required to let the hind axle go by. Then we gave up chipping any more, and all got under the near side, and, with one mighty heave, lifted the whole thing over this last

remaining protrusion, and the obstacle was passed. We put the mares to again, and having rewarded the quarrymen as promised (that job cost us 20 francs, but it was worth it), came on slowly down the hill and through Laignueglia, Willie and I walking on in front with lanterns on each side of the road to guide Joseph, as it was by this time as dark as pitch, till we came to the suburbs of Alassio.

There we found the streets as narrow as usual, but we had scraped about half-way through, when progress was again stopped by a heap of earthquake *debris* piled up against the off wall, and in which our wheels on that side got so deeply enfoncéed in our attempt to take it with a run, that, with all the struggles of the mares, we could neither get backwards nor forwards. A small crowd speedily collected, every one proffering advice, but it did not seem to occur to any of them to give us any more material help: and then a policeman came up, who we expected was going to threaten us with all the terrors of the law for obstructing the streets; but he was quite callous as to that offence, and had only hurried on to the scene on hearing the news in alarm for his own house-door, which he begged us to be careful of, as it had only just been painted, and after that he joined the general crowd of advisers.

At this point we thought it advisable to send poor Peg, who was shivering with cold, on with James to the Grand Hotel, where her mother was, and whither we were destined, to announce our arrival, and perhaps get some one to come out to our help. After she had gone, we stuck there quite another quarter of an hour, the bystanders still chattering, till at last Willie and I got impatient, and having taken the mares out again, went to the hind-wheels ourselves, which were the deepest sunk in, and told them in good plain Eng-

lish that they would be doing us much more service if they came and shoved too, instead of wasting their breath with a lot of useless talking, and our winged words actually had the desired effect. In half a minute they were all round the Escargot too, some at the pole, some at the fore, some at the hind wheels, and some under the body, and with another great lift we got the wheels free, and descended on to the smooth pavement all clear again.

The policeman came to me while Willie and Joseph were putting the mares to again, and made me understand that it was no use our trying to get through the town proper, as the streets were much too narrow, but that our best plan would be to go round by the station to the Grand Hotel; so as soon as we were ready, having thanked him and the other assistants, we started in the direction that he had recommended. But presently we found ourselves in a large square, with no apparent exit except by the way by which we had come in, and another which had a notice-board, of which the evident import was that no vehicles were on any account allowed to pass it, stuck up at the end. A man passed by at that moment, and we hailed him and asked him the way to the hotel, to which he replied by pointing down the interdicted street. But the notice? we asked. Oh, that was of no consequence, he said, so we set off boldly past the notice: but the street was shaped like a funnel, and got narrower and narrower, till there was only just room as we came to the other end for our axles, and there was another post sunk into the pavement in the middle of the roadway, which, although it hadn't got another notice on it, was an even more effectual bar to our further advance than the other.

Just then, a man in evening clothes accosted me, and asked me if I was the gentleman with the caravan, as he had come

out from the hotel to meet me, and on my saying that I was, asked me where the caravan was. I pointed backwards up the street, and he said that we couldn't come down there because of the post; to which I responded that I could see that per-



fectly well, but we couldn't possibly go back again, and the only thing I could see to do was to pull up the post, and if there was any row pay the fine afterwards. On that, he went into a drinking-shop at the corner and fetched out four

ruffians, and with no further ado we pulled up the post, and drove out of our trap triumphantly, right under the nose of three gendarmes, who were looking at us; but our friend told us that this is Carnival night—it had struck us that the Alassio people, of whom there were a goodly number about the streets, were rather oddly attired—and the police were not very particular as to what was done in the town.

So we put back the post loosely, and drove on to the hotel, and here we have put the mares up in a comfortable stable for a good rest till we go on our final stage to Genoa, and Peg and I are established in a room in the hotel, the first night we have slept in a house for over two months. The Escargot is drawn up in front of the backdoor of the hotel, and Joseph and James have taken possession of it for the time being. And we are not altogether sure that we enjoy this return to civilisation.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF OUR STAY AT ALASSIO.

WE stopped at Alassio a little under three weeks, to give the mares time to recruit themselves before we took them on to Genoa, where, alas! they would have to be sold, and we would have to finish our vagabond life, at any rate for a good long time to come. We returned for the time being to civilisation, taking rooms and living in the hotel, Joseph taking our place in the Escargot—nominally in company with James, but actually by himself, as James, for some reason or other, for the most part preferred spending his nights on the cold stone back-staircase of the hotel. Joseph was rather inclined to raise objections at first to his new quarters, coming to us the first few mornings with lamentable tales of how cold and wretched the interior of the Escargot was; but we really didn't see that what had been good enough for us was not good enough for him, considering that we had taken him from a bed on the straw in a stable—and, as a matter of fact, experience had taught us that as regarded draughts the state of the hotel was to that of the Escargot as infinity to nought. Joseph, however, let out the real secret of his dislike to sleeping in the caravan by one day adding to his lamentations,

probably as an extra inducement to our relenting, that there were always such strange noises about the outside of her all night, which made it evident that he was still imbued with the idea that there was a gigantic European conspiracy to take his one particular life, and we really couldn't put ourselves out for that.

The hotel was pretty full, most of the inmates being retired major-generals, though of course there were exceptions, the principal being a talented lady authoress and the brother of an eminent Eastern explorer, who, indeed, perhaps from the fact that they were exceptions to the major-general rule, performed the functions of the principal leaders of society in the little community. The larger part of the people were *habitués* of the hotel, coming there regularly every season, and those who were not had been there for the whole of the winter; but Peg's mother and sister having come in advance of us had broken the ice for us, so to speak, so that we were received with great cordiality, and not regarded as interlopers, as is so often the case with late comers at a foreign hotel mainly supported by our prudently reserved fellow-countrymen. Perhaps the somewhat novel mode of our arrival had something to do with the welcome accorded us, as Alassio is a place not overburdened with excitement, and any small diversion would, I should suppose, be agreeable, as a change from the general monotony of a life whose chief object of existence is to be the first to get hold of the 'Times' on its arrival every day. Through the hotel people we soon got to know the residents in the villas round about, so that we had nothing to complain of in our life at Alassio, as far as life at a health-resort goes.

Alassio is a funny little place, quite a type of the usual Italian coast town, the town proper lying squeezed in

between its walls, the whole thing built somewhere in the good old medieval times of pirates and all those sort of joys, and hardly touched since. The main coast road runs right through it, in at the gate at one end and out at the gate at the other, forming the main street of the town, the narrowness of which may be imagined when I state that, on the first night of our arrival, when we had strayed by mistake back into the street, it was just a touch-and-go affair in places whether our axle-boxes wouldn't bring up short against projections in the walls. The street widens out in one or two places into sort of squares, which form bays to enable carts coming in opposite directions to pass each other; but carts don't often pass along the street at all, generally preferring to go round. Off the main street are various side streets or alleys leading to the less fashionable parts of the town.

The shops of Alassio are not numerous, and the majority of those which do exist don't seem to sell anything. The chief emporium of the town partook something of the nature of the ordinary village shop of our native land, where one could ask for anything one wanted from a penny-worth of soft sugar to a bicycle, and if they didn't happen to have it at the time, one had to go without it. This shop was the great resort of the ladies in the hotel, who used to frequent it in search of strangely shaped pots and pans, such as the Italian peasant uses for preparing his frugal meal, but which they destined for prominent positions in their drawing-rooms at home. There was also at one period a considerable run on coloured pocket-handkerchiefs, till one day, the supply running short, the proprietress of the establishment, on being questioned when she would have any more, was understood to reply that she was expecting some more from

England very shortly; after which the demand for them slackened.

A desire to cultivate colloquial Italian was generally expressed as the reason for this lavish outlay on domestic decoration; but, as a matter of fact, the dialect of the lady of the shop and her husband was so essentially provincial, that the conversation, however well intentioned it might be at the commencement, generally degenerated about a quarter of the way through it into a kind of Volapuk, and finally lapsed into signs for the latter half of it. Willie and I always began at the other end, and never attempted anything beyond signs. Our first purchase was a padlock, which we bought the day after our arrival to supply the place of the one which had had to be broken open, owing to Joseph's carelessness about the keys. Willie first drew a picture of it on a leaf of his note-book, but that only produced a little round pot with a rising handle like a basket—I suppose because that was the kind of article chiefly affected by the British as a nation in these parts. And then, after we had shown the woman keys and made noises supposed to be like the opening of padlocks, and resorted to various other dodges, she at last smiled and shook her head, and pointing to a ladder in the corner of the shop, intimated that we had better climb about and look for what we wanted for ourselves, which we did; and whenever afterwards we went to get anything at that shop, we always went straight for the ladder, and it was noticeable that we always got what we wanted twenty-five per cent sooner than anybody else.

Outside the town proper, at a respectful distance all round the walls, was a sort of secondary suburb or set of suburbs, put up, I suppose, as the population increased and got too tight for its original shell. These adjuncts contained the

railway-station, post-office, and other public buildings that were not contemplated in the original plan of the average medieval town. The post-office was a little hole in the wall in the side of the entrance-passage of a private house, and was presided over by a venerable official, who opened or shut the hatch of this opening at his own convenience; and it appeared to be usually more to his convenience to shut it. He as often as not kept our letters a week before sending them on to us, and he invariably made mistakes of foreign telegrams, so that our communication with the outside world was somewhat precarious, indeed almost as medieval as the town itself. But it would not do to be hard on the old man; he had in all likelihood shed his blood on the field of battle for his country half a century before.

Then beyond this first set of suburbs there was a big hotel at each end of the town: ours lay at the east end, with its backdoor opening on to the sea-beach. In front of it ran the road, then a little bit of cultivated land, then a half-grown boulevard, then the railway, and then the hills rose straight up behind, on which were situated most of the villas of the regular fixed English residents of Alassio. There was another set of suburbs still farther to the east from our hotel, in which there were other villas.

The principal local amusements were playing lawn-tennis at some one or other of the residential villas, and taking our luncheon out, and climbing up some of the hills at the back in search of picturesque places in which to eat it. The ascent of the hills was performed by means of paths called *sibotas*, which were designed, also in the good old times, after the model of a kitchen chimney, being quite as steep, and nearly as narrow, and paved with large stones, warranted to wear out the thickest shooting-boots in three attempts. Still,

the view from the top was very fine; when it was clear we were told we could see Corsica, and a great many people did see it: and there were some quaint old villages up there, built on the plan of rabbit-warrens, and inhabited by goats and old women, and pretty though somewhat scantily clothed children—and that portion of us that survived to achieve the summit always considered itself amply rewarded for its pains.

The young doctor of the place turned out to be an old college acquaintance of mine, and he put us up to a good many of the ways of the place. Amongst many other things for which Willie and I were indebted to him was an introduction to the local Carnival ball, which took place a little time after our arrival. It was a somewhat mixed affair, so that it gave us ample opportunity of seeing one phase of the real life of the people. It was held in a big sort of assembly room in the centre of the town. There was a platform at one end, apparently used on occasions as a stage for private theatricals, but now occupied by the music, which consisted of a piano-organ, worked by any of the guests who didn't happen to feel disposed to dance for the moment. All the town was there; amongst others, both the hotel waiters and two of the chamber-maids. We went as "distinguished visitors," being in ordinary costume, and nobody resented us—on the contrary, we were conducted by the master of the ceremonies to a place of honour at the top of the room. There we found all the chief people of the town, who accorded us a hearty welcome—in Italian—to which we replied equally heartily—in English; and then, fortunately, just as there seemed a possibility of the conversation flagging, we made the acquaintance of a retired sea-captain, who had served in more than one English ship in his time, and very kindly acted as interpreter for the rest of the evening.

The dancing was inclined to be vigorous, but there was still grace about it: the floor looked as if it had been carefully planed across the grain all over in preparation for the festivity; but as nobody glode, but the prevailing fashion of dancing was to lift the feet well off the floor between each step, that didn't matter much, and everybody was evidently enjoying him or her self thoroughly, in spite of any trivial deficiencies in the plant of the entertainment. There were some very pretty girls there, sitting round the room in fancy dress, but unmasked: they were chiefly looking on, and only danced when asked by some private friend or by some one specially introduced; the rule of masked balls being that one is only free to ask people one doesn't know to dance when they have their masks on. There was another rule about that ball that I think might be very advantageously adopted in some of our crowded London ball-rooms during the season—that was, that only a certain number of couples were allowed on the floor at once, according to the discretion of the master of the ceremonies; and when that official considered they had had their share of the fun for the time being, he clapped his hands, and they all filed off through a door at the end of the room leading into a kind of lobby which opened off it, and took their places in a *queue* to work round the lobby, and out at another door when their turn came again.

Willie and I are neither of us at any time great dancers, but the sight of all this genuine enjoyment fired us with a spirit of emulation: the only objection to our taking an active part in the proceedings was a certain amount of shyness about dancing with partners who would be a thousand to one as ignorant of our language as we were of theirs. The actual asking them to dance would be of



THE BALL AT ALASSIO.

course a mere trifle, and wouldn't be much more unintelligible than it very often is in a London ball-room, but it was the intervals between the dancing that we dreaded. We were in hopes of seeing the two chamber-maids, but they were masked, and we couldn't make them out for certain.

But there was a certain enormously fat lady, however, whom we had noticed sitting in a corner looking on at the dancing: she was masked, but probably nobody could summon up sufficient energy to undertake her pilotage, and so she had been sitting there disconsolately all the evening. A spirit of adventure seized me: and anyhow, if she could be got two or three times round the room, she would be too much occupied getting her breath in the interval to want to talk much. I accordingly challenged Willie, if I danced with her, that he should do the same afterwards: he agreed, and I marched boldly across the room, and, bowing to the lady, gave her to understand in the most fashionable London season mumble that I would be glad of the honour of a dance with her. She rose with alacrity: I spent the short interval before the master of the ceremonies gave the signal for a fresh lot of couples to start, in getting a firm hold of her, and then we started.

She took a little time to get under weigh—she must have weighed twenty-six stone if she weighed an ounce—but at last, after I had run round her two or three times, we got up the necessary swing, and off we went. Our progress was colossal: as we acquired greater speed so we acquired greater force, and we whirled about amongst the other couples like the teetotum in the child's castle game, the other dancers representing the castles, and, as they came in contact with us, being sent spinning on to the

laps of the sitters-out, or into the farthest corners of the room. Our turn was soon over; but no amount of clapping of the M.C.'s hands availed to stop us in our triumphant career: we could no more pull up than if we had been the Scotch express—not so well, perhaps, as we hadn't got an automatic brake on. The only thing to be done was to cease all voluntary movement, and let our impetus die out of itself: and this it did at last, and I conducted my partner with some slight feeling of pride back to her seat, and, making her a bow, to which she responded with a feeble *Gratias*, returned to Willie, self-satisfied with the agreeable consciousness of a duty done.

Our nautical friend congratulated me on my feat: and it turned out afterwards that he had good reason to know what it was that I had accomplished, for the doctor told us that the lady was his wife. Willie did his part like a man a little later in the evening: the lady was evidently flattered by the impression she had made on the part of the two young English noblemen; but it was interesting to observe how unanimously all the other dancers retired for the time being, when they saw her getting ready for action the second time, so that she and Willie had practically the whole floor to themselves.

Meanwhile, the mares had been waxing fat in the hospitable stable of the Grand Hotel, and it was not much wonder that they did, for when I came to pay my corn bill, I found that they had been living at the rate of six feeds a-day each, thanks to Joseph's anxiety to make them look well for their impending sale: it is a matter of some surprise to me indeed that they didn't burst. They likewise began to kick, and we to experience the inconvenience so common to people who are placed in a position by for-

tune to have a stud which they don't in the least want to bother to use. I told Joseph to take them out for riding exercise every day, but that didn't content them, and, in the exuberance of their spirits, they pulled down all the furniture in the stable—not much, to be sure, but enough to occasion a complaint on the part of the hotel ostler—so then I gave him *carte-blanche* to take any one out for a drive in the hotel waggonette whom he liked, and who liked to go: which permission he availed himself of with the greatest alacrity, and might have been seen conducting select parties of somewhat nervous ladies'-maids every morning and afternoon, first with one mare and then with the other. But that didn't prove to be sufficient exercise for them either, for the waggonette was unto them even as a tin kettle to a dog's tail, and they both ran away with it one after the other, and narrowly missed smashing it all to bits by trying to take it into the stable with them; and, when they had at last been unharnessed and shut into the stable again, set to work to valse round and round the place, till the terrified ostler came running into the hotel to know where Joseph and myself were, to come and stop them, as he didn't dare to go in, and all the other beasts, consisting of two mules and the doctor's pony, had climbed up into the mangers to get out of the way of their hoofs.

So we had to reduce their diet by knocking off half their corn and giving them *carruba* seed—a kind of bean that grows on trees, and is more commonly used in Italy to feed horses than corn—and likewise take them out for exercise in the caravan, which we stripped of the bed and the stove and all the other interior fittings, and so transformed it into a very comfortable omnibus, in which we used to take out picnic

parties to the principal places of interest in the neighbourhood: at least, such as we could reasonably get at, for besides the main road along the Riviera, there was only one broad one that could possibly be used, and that only with difficulty, for the passage of the Escargot. We had our regular party: Peg's mother and sister; an old lady who sat opposite to us at *table d'hôte*—and with whom I fell in love at first sight on account of her likeness to my dear old grandmother—and her daughter; the chaplain and one of his daughters; and an artist of some note and his wife, who had arrived at the hotel some two days after we did, and who were profoundly taken with the idea of adopting caravanning for themselves some day for the furtherance of the husband's professional work,—all of whom, with Peg, Willie, James, Joseph, and myself, made up a tolerably good caravanful, needing some careful and tight packing; but they all declared they enjoyed themselves immensely, and were always ready to go on an expedition when a new one was announced. And the weight of the combined party took some of the exuberance out of the mares: there was a considerable hill up round the Capo San Croce out of Alassio, and after the first two or three expeditions, the Missus took to jibbing at that in quite the old style, thus entirely relieving us of any apprehensions of their running away with the Escargot when we resumed our journey.

We made two or three expeditions to Albenga, with its curious old Roman bridge standing uselessly now by the side of the road—the river, which it once crossed, having shifted bodily away to the other side of the town. Albenga is a largish place, with a Cathedral and a perfect labyrinth of streets, in which our party were always losing themselves: the only hope for them in that case being to make their way

somehow to the outside of the town, and then follow the wall till they came to the caravan, and there wait for the others to do the same, as, if they attempted to go in search of them, they only had to begin all over again. I never saw so many children all together as there were in the suburbs of Albenga; and after our first two or three visits they began to look for us, and came round the mares in hundreds to get us to throw coppers for them to scramble: a most amusing pastime for those who were waiting, as it was productive of the most delightful chaos of legs and arms ever seen, with James rushing excitedly round the struggling mass, and playfully laying hold of the end of any fluttering garments, of which there were plenty, that might catch his eye. Our chief expedition off the main road was up a by-road about half a mile before coming to Albenga, along the bank of the river, to a place called Villanova, apparently because it was as old as any place in Italy. It was a most interesting little hole; I should say just an old feudal castle, adapted by the peasantry after the fall of their oppressors to their own purposes—very picturesque, but, heavens! so filthily dirty.

The weather was very cold all the time we were at Alassio, and another form of amusement we got out of the Escargot was tea-parties to those of our friends who wished to get warm, and found it impossible to do so at the somewhat limited fireplace accommodation of the hotel. We could get up any degree of warmth we liked, and there was a great run on us on that account; I have seen as many as fifteen people packed inside to afternoon tea, and we had to pull the person nearest the door rather sharply away, to enable the company to disperse when the entertainment was over.

But the days passed on, and it was time for us to be

getting on to Genoa, to be able to be out of the country within the prescribed fifty days of the *douane*. And so at last the morning broke when we rose from our couch of civilisation for the last time, and took our places—but not altogether with regret—for our return to gipsydom.



CHAPTER XXIII.

FORWARD!—DISASTER AND SHIPWRECK.

WE started off blithely, as the novels say, on the second Thursday after our arrival at Alassio. For the final section of our voyage to Genoa Willie did not accompany us. It is one of the hardships of the British soldier officer's life that when he does get away on leave, it is only strictly on sufferance, and he has to keep the War Office up to date as to his latitude and longitude on the earth's surface, so that it can get at him, if it should chance to want him, at any moment; and it happened that the last communication that Willie had received from those in authority over him had been to the effect that very likely the next would summon him home. Now, though Willie could give approximately his various positions at different intervals during the next three days, as he had been doing throughout the journey, he couldn't give them exactly enough to suit the exigencies of the occasion in question, and so, with the fear of a court-martial or some other equally unpleasant function before him, he deemed it more advisable to remain where he was till the time came for him to come on straight, and in one stage, with the less nomadic contingent of the family to Genoa.

We started then, as I said before, on the Thursday morning, at about ten of the clock. We had intended to leave at half-past eight; but for reasons already given in similar cases in the preceding parts of this history, and now unnecessary, therefore, to be recapitulated, we hadn't. Everybody came out to see us off. All, or at any rate most, of the major-generals and their followings; the lady authoress, the explorer's brother, and all the rest of them, including our worthy host of the Grand Hotel and his lady, and all the staff of waiters, cooks, and chamber-maids. And from the villas on the hills came the chaplain and his family; and all the rest of the residents, except a few, and they sent letters of apology and sympathy with our cause, as, of course, was only right on a great public occasion such as this; and the doctor,—and all were laden with smiles and bouquets, and good wishes for a safe ending to our journey.

It was a fine day. The mares were in grand condition, and everything seemed to us propitious—that is to say, to Peggy, to James, who, seeing the Escargot really prepared for the voyage again, restrained himself from the diurnal and ever futile pursuit after the aboriginal cats of the locality, and took up his official position half in and half out of the doorway, and to myself. Not so, however, to Joseph. As I took my place, after shaking hands all round for positively the last time, and helping Peggy up beside him on the foot-board, I heard him muttering something between his teeth, and on my questioning him as to the cause of his apparent disquietude, he confided to me in a low tone that he knew no good would come to us that journey, for the priest—meaning the chaplain—had driven away all prospects of good fortune by intruding his presence on our start. I gave him concisely, but pretty clearly, to understand that he was

an ass; and then, with a final adieu cast to the assembly in general, we set off. The mares seemed to know they were to be engaged in genuinely serious work again, and responded cheerily to our call upon them. Through the narrow outlying suburb, fortunately meeting nothing on the way, past the villas beyond, and across the level-crossing of the railway. Here we met another party of leave-takers, Willie and his mother and sister, our old lady friend and her daughter, and the artist and his wife, and, at the request of the latter, pulled up for a few minutes while they took a photograph of us in travelling order. That done, we began the ascent of the hill.

The Missus objected a little at first; but eventually, probably induced thereto by the representations of the more sensible Mary Ann that they were going to face it for the last time, and perhaps after they had once got over it they would find better things in store for them on the other side, set herself to the collar, and took the incline at a good solid walk. Peg's mother came inside with me, while Peg and the rest of the party followed behind to the top of the hill. There Peg got up, and her mother got down, and the brake having been put on, we went away down the hill, with handkerchiefs and hands waving to us till the next turn in the Riviera road round Capo San Croce shut out our last view of Alassio and its hospitable company.

We continued along at a fair swinging trot for the next four miles or so, nearly all down-hill to Albenga, where a few of our small friends of our former visit waved their welcomes to us as we rumbled past, but I am afraid were a little disappointed that we did not repeat the fun of that occasion. Then a good flat road past the old bridge, gradually verging inland through olive-yards and vineyards, and

then towards the coast again as we passed Ceriale, and two miles farther came in sight of Loano. There between ourselves and that flourishing townlet an awful expanse of stones met our view, covering the whole width of the road for at least half a mile, quite eighteen inches deep, as bad as, if indeed not worse than, anything that we had experienced of that kind in France, and without even a steam-roller at work on it to afford us the poor consolation that the Highway Board, or whatever the Italian equivalent for that may be, was at least making a show of doing something to better it for purposes of traffic. Evidently in Italy they put down their stones, or even, when necessary, entirely new metal their roads, and let them and the traffic adapt themselves to each other as best they can. No doubt, if any of the authorities had been about at the time, they would have welcomed the two tons of the Escargot as a perfect godsend for the district; but we didn't look on it in that light: we held a council of war, and cast about for some means of going round.

There was a bridge over one of the make-believe rivers of the country just before coming to the obstacle, and just on the other side of it, at right angles on the left, was a narrow by-road running between two stone walls. It didn't in any way promise to take us in the right direction, but it was smooth, and anything of that nature was better than the stones, so we determined to trust ourselves to it. We crossed the bridge, struggled across the corner of the offending stones, which rumbled us all up together till we couldn't tell which was us and which was the crockery, and bumped down off them on to the alternative route, hoping that by pursuing a methodical system of always turning the first to the right, we should thereby circumvent the difficulty, and come back

in time to a happier condition of things on the State highway.

We proceeded for some distance before we came to a turn to the right at all, and then it only led into a ploughed field, so we had to continue our researches and go on and on, the road becoming alarmingly narrower, and the walls alarmingly higher every minute, till at last we began to feel a little nervous lest we had struck on the road to Turin or somewhere in that direction, where we didn't in the least want to go, when to our great joy we came on a native, the third we had seen since leaving Albenga. The other two had been looking out of windows in Ceriale. Where the Italian rural population puts itself away to during the day I can't say, nor when it does its work. Somebody of course must do the work, as the fields are all tilled and the vines and olives all trimmed and trained, but one very seldom sees any one doing it.

However, to return to our immediate native. Fortunately he was only using his own legs as a means of locomotion, as we couldn't possibly have got past him under any other circumstances: as it was, he had to flatten himself out against one wall to prevent our off wheel grazing him more severely than it did, while our near axles carved their habitual groove in the other wall. Our deficiencies in the Italian line led us to confine our inquiries from him to the single word "Genova?" after the fashion of Mrs A'Becket, intonated in an interrogative kind of way, while I pointed with the whip along the road in front of us; but on his only shrugging his shoulders and vouchsafing no reply, it occurred to Peggy that very likely Genoa was a place he had never heard of, as being beyond the limit of his daily walk to and from his work, so she tried him with "Loano?" gesticulating in the

same fashion in her turn. This seemed to touch him more nearly; a faint gleam of intelligence flickered on his countenance, and raising his umbrella—all Italian peasants have umbrellas, the same as French—he pointed with it in the direction whence we had come. Of course that wasn't good enough. I went through a series of pantomimic manoeuvres demonstrative of the impossibility of turning the Escargot round except by executing a complete somersault with the whole thing, and the fact being already pretty obvious without any such demonstration, he began to perceive that if he was going to help us at all, it must be some other way.

He was not apparently in more of a hurry than the average Italian peasant, so though he had been coming in the opposite direction to ourselves when we met him, his next move was to climb up in a dignified way on the foot-board alongside of me, and make signs that he would guide our erring footsteps back into the right path. I gave him a fill of tobacco for his pipe, to relieve him of some of the embarrassment of our forced silence, and then we proceeded. Still on and on, and Joseph was just beginning to mutter again this time, to the effect that he was sure this was a decoy sent out by brigands on purpose to lure people in caravans to their destruction, when at last we came to the expected turn to the right. It was a very sharp turn, at an acute angle to the track we had been following hitherto, which of course was good, in that it promised a speedier return to the main road; but owing to the same circumstance, it was a very tight squeeze round the angle, and we did a good deal towards transforming it into an elegant curve while we were negotiating it. Here our guide made signs that he wanted to be put down, and something for

himself, pointing at the same time straight ahead, to denote that we had only to follow our noses to get to Loano, so we satisfied his requirements, and when he had left us, continued on our way rejoicing.

True enough the track did lead us to Loano, or anyway to one side of it, into a big sort of grass square surrounded by vineyard walls, looking very like a drying-ground, and where, as we had now come a good ten miles, we halted for lunch, unhitching the mares for them to have their feed as well. Then I had a lesson to the effect that it never does to trust anything to anybody else. Master Joseph informed us that there was nothing for the poor beasts to eat in the fodder-box. It appeared that in the course of our fattening them up at Alassio, we had used up the last of the oats that were to be had in the place, and so had had to come away without any: we hadn't even brought a single *carruba* seed with us. I didn't tell Joseph all I thought, but sent him out with a sack to see if he couldn't buy anything in Loano; and meanwhile Peggy and James and I cooked and ate our lunch, while the poor mares strolled about at the length of their halters, trying to nibble something of the dried-up verdure of the little common, and occasionally putting their faces in at the doorway, and looking as if they thought they would like some poached eggs and sardines too.

Joseph was away about three-quarters of an hour, and when he did at last return, it was with the dispiriting news that he hadn't been able to get anything whatever! This was a pretty state of things: we could do nothing but give the mares the remainder of our bread—fortunately there was a good deal of it—and some water. I have seen Swiss horses go for a whole day on nothing else, but then they are used to it, and besides, they are never as big as our great strapping

mares were, but there was no help for it. I felt quite remorseful when the poor animals looked at us wistfully with their great sad eyes, as we put them in again, as if to ask if that was really all they were going to get; but I promised them a good feed to make up for their present short commons when we got in for the night, and so we shook the dust off our feet against inhospitable Loano.

It now being about a quarter to three, it behoved us to try and push on as fast as possible in order to make Noli at a reasonable hour in the evening, which the proprietor of the Grand Hotel had told us was the first place where we would be likely to find a decent stable for the mares for the night. We got back to the sea after Loano, and kept along a fairly level road through Pietra Liguria to Finalmarina, where we had to turn aside at the town gates, by reason of their being really too narrow this time to let us through, and go round by a kind of marine parade between the walls and the sea, at considerable risk to the infant portion of the population, which was disporting itself out there before its tea-time. There the way was becoming more up and down, as the hills drew in towards the coast again, and the railway, which had rejoined our track, kept dodging in and out of tunnels as it passed under the spurs which ran out into the sea, and over which we laboriously climbed, and so came to Varigotti.

It was now beginning to show signs of getting dark, one can't call it dusk, as they don't have any dusk worth speaking of in Italy, and as we had another two or three miles to go, over what did not seem a very promising road, we did our best to push on; but the want of the noonday feed, and the constant additional strain on the collars in the ascents, were beginning to tell on the mares, and though we encouraged

them to our utmost, we couldn't get anything half as good out of them as the pace we had made in the morning. Besides, the Missus was beginning her old tricks, and jibbed more and more every time we tried to persuade her to go on, until our prospects of reaching Noli by anything like daylight seemed very small.

After Varigotti we crossed the railway, and then came a steady climb for about a quarter of a mile. Here the Missus became obstinate, jibbed, backed, and jibbed again, till we got broadside on right across the road about half-way up, with our hind-wheels perilously near the edge of the embankment up which the road was carried. Some railway gangers coming by just then, I appealed to them to lend us a hand, and though of course they couldn't understand what I said, it was very clear what we wanted; so having with a mighty effort on our part, and an extra amount of barking on that of James, who had been keeping up his usual excited chant the whole time, evidently considering that the more he shouted the more he helped us, got the Escargot straight into her course, we then blocked the wheels with large boulders to prevent her swinging back out of it again. Then the gangers put their hands to the sides and back—Italians don't seem to have ever yet grasped what a vast increase of power one gets by putting one's shoulder direct to one's work—and with a shove as nearly all together as we could manage, and the hearty co-operation of the excellent Mary Ann, we pushed the Escargot, till at last for very shame, not to speak of to prevent being run over, the Missus began to do her share of the work as well, forgetting her little troubles for the moment, and so, struggling and groaning and panting, and raising an overwhelming cloud of dust, we reached the top of the hill.

Here we stopped to thank our assistants, and present them with a slight token of our gratitude; and were proceeding, when, to our surprise, one of them came to the step of the Escargot, and, as spokesman for his companions, gave us very unmistakably to understand by his signs that they did not consider our gratuity enough. The difference between the French and Italian lower orders in similar circumstances will be at once evident to the studious reader of this book, and requires no further comment from myself. However, on the principle that in Rome one must take the Romans as one finds them, I expressed myself extremely sorry for the mistake, and I did know enough of his language by this time to ask him verbally how much more he expected. He assessed his party's service at just half as much again as I had given them. I had made it a fair round sum, as it just happened that it would divide exactly evenly amongst them, in shares that I am sure, though I say it perhaps that shouldn't, would have been willingly and gratefully accepted by any peasant of any less grasping nationality than that which we now had to deal with, as a recompense for his extremely small portion of a furlong's shove. I must say I was particularly tickled at the idea of their exactly fixing a price for what in any other country would have been done in the light of a piece of goodwill more than anything else.

But, as it happened, I found on searching my pockets that I had not a *soldo* of small change left, so I had perforce to signify that I could not satisfy them. Then the man began to threaten, and two of his companions laid hold of the mares' heads. Peg was a little alarmed; but as it was no use arguing any further, when neither of the parties understood the other, I flicked the mares with the whip, and taking off my hat to the ringleader and wishing him *Buona*

scra, just to show that there was no ill-feeling, we started forward again; the two men at the bridles falling back immediately to avoid the impression of Mary Ann's and the Missus's fairy footsteps on their toes, and in a few minutes we had left them and their vociferated grumblings well in the rear.

We passed through a cutting in the rocks, and then descended to the shore again—right on to the very beach this time, the road becoming very narrow, running between the railway on the left and a narrow strip of soft drifting sand on the right. How it happened I don't know to this day: it may have been that we weren't looking out sharp enough, as I am afraid had sometimes got into the way of being the case along the flat, when the mares only had to jog straight along ahead; but I think the Missus must have jibbed, as all in a moment we found our off wheels off the road, and, as they turned, sinking deeper and deeper into the sand. Joseph jumped down and caught hold of the Missus's bridle to try and pull her out, but by doing so he only got her temper up the more, and for a moment she got the mastery of Joseph, Mary Ann, myself, and the whole concern; and the next stage in the proceedings was that all four wheels got well into the sand, revolved about once and a half, and then stuck fast.

All the rest of us jumped out to lighten the Escargot as much as possible, but of course it didn't make above a couple of hundredweight or so of difference. I went to the wheel, while Joseph pulled at the mares' heads; but what could I do towards raising such a weight, even if my feet hadn't slipped away from under me, as did also Joseph's and the mares' in the shifting sand. Just then our former fatigue-party came by. I have endeavoured to the utmost to keep

this narrative free of all insular prejudices ; but I do really think that if an Englishman had seen us in such a predicament, even supposing he had been disappointed of an extra twopence-halfpenny for some former little service which he had done for us, he would have put that aside as a done for job, and come forward to offer a second instalment of assistance : but here, these men studiously kept their faces turned away from us, and marched straight by within two yards of us, and never so much as offered to move a finger in our behalf. I have been told that I have a fairly equable temper, but—— However, as I remarked before, comment is needless.

There being nobody to help us, we had to make the best of what we could do for ourselves. Our next move was to get the forecarriage round at right angles to the body, so as to get the mares on to the road and give them a better footing, and also to give the fore-wheels less to travel over of sand before reaching firm ground. I went to the mares' heads, and after talking to and patting them a bit, as they were beginning to be rather frightened, and Joseph had got back on to the footboard to take the reins, we began to struggle again. Poor Mary Ann did her best, and even the Missus did a little ; but they could not move the ponderous weight behind them, and only cut up great holes in the road with their hoofs, as they gallantly bent to the collar and strained at their traces : then suddenly, before I was fully aware what he was up to, Joseph ran along the pole and jumped on the Missus's back. She must have pulled for the moment harder than her companion ; the pole came round at a sharper angle to the body, bringing the forecarriage with it, till all at once the whole thing brought up short against the brake-block of the near hind-wheel,

there was a crack, and our pole had broken off close to the socket!

Here was a pretty state of things. Night was coming on fast; we were firmly imbedded in the sand, and, with no pole and apparently no immediate prospect of getting any substitute for one, the chances seemed very strongly in favour of our stopping there all night. And we had nothing to eat but four eggs and half a box of sardines! There was only one course to be taken—rather a good thing than otherwise, as, if that course turns out a failure, you haven't got to reproach yourself with not having taken the other one—namely, to send Joseph on Mary Ann into Noli to try, if possible, to get some one to lend us a pole and a *renfort*, and, failing that, to bring, at any rate, some food, and some one to carry our own pole back to get it repaired by the next day. Joseph obeyed willingly, and when he had left we sat down and waited there by the sad sea-shore; Peggy made some tea, and James took up his position beneath the Missus's nose as she stood picketed to the wheel, and anathematised her in his own language.

It occurred to me that with some stout string and two or three oak pegs, of both of which materials we had plenty in the tool-chest, I might splice up the pole myself, at any rate strongly enough to carry us on into Noli. So I got out my tools and set to work with the centre-bit by the light of the lantern; and though the pole was tough, and the working of it was not materially assisted by the uneven and wobbly nature of the ground, I was getting on fairly well, and might have finished the job by the next morning, when out of the darkness appeared Joseph on Mary Ann, and accompanied by a large body of fisher-looking sort of people with a forked pole, which looked remarkably like the ordinary clothes-

prop of civilisation, and a long line, which might have come from the same establishment, and a horse—that is, at least, one of those four-legged things that they call horses in Italy.

This looked better than nothing, at any rate, though not much, and we lost no time in putting the jury-pole into its place and lashing it there with the line. One of the men spoke French of a sort—about the same sort as my own—so we got along better in this case than we had more than once done before since crossing the border. We put the mares to again, and made fast the *renfort* to the end of the pole: Joseph took the reins, I went to the mares' heads, and the *renfort* owner to his beast's, part of the men went to the hind-wheels and part to the body, and, with a well-applied effort in perfect unison, we struggled back on to the main road again.

I rejoined Joseph on the footboard, he still driving, and we ascended the hill out of the bay where we had been stranded, and rounded the next headland, both mares pulling well, the Missus being, as usual, more willing when she saw something helping her in front. And then we commenced to descend again. It was now perfectly dark, and we could only just make out, by the flickering light of the hurricane-lamp, the cliff on our left and the mud wall of the parapet on our right, on which side, too, we could hear the sea beating far down below on the rocks, and, very dimly, our team striding along in front of us. Presently the Escargot began to gain impetus as we proceeded down the incline: the mares had to hasten their pace to keep out of her way, and the *renfort* still more to keep out of theirs; when, suddenly, Joseph called to me to stand clear, and stepped quickly over to the near side of the footboard, jostling me

right to the end. I had only just time to look down and realise that the rotten old lashing had snapped, and the Escargot had taken charge, and was running of her own weight down the hill, when crash——!

How the mares escaped was a miracle; and thanks be to Providence that our forecarriage was built strong enough to bear the test. Joseph had had the presence of mind to pull the near rein as taut as he could, and the traces had turned the forecarriage towards the cliff instead of the mud wall, and we had run into a boulder lying under the cliff. A shout from our fisher escort, a shriek from Peggy, which she couldn't restrain, and we turned over at an angle of forty-five degrees into the ditch!

CHAPTER XXIV.

PUT STRAIGHT AGAIN—ON TO SAVONA.

NOTHING could be done that night to extricate us from the awkward situation into which we had fallen, so after holding a consultation with Joseph and the man with the broken French, we decided on the best course being for Joseph to take the mares into Noli and put them up there, while two of the fisher people carried our broken pole between them to get it mended the first thing in the morning, and bring it along with them when they came with additional help both of men and appliances to lift us back into our normal horizontal position. We found that we had been wrecked close to one of the short intervals between two of the interminable tunnels through which the railway passes in that section of its course, and a very nice-spoken—though he only spoke in Italian—signalman who had heard the noise of our crash came along to see what was the matter, and promised us the use of the tools that he kept in his hut for hasty repairs on the line when we should want them in the morning. He also promised to keep an eye on us all night, so as to be ready to come to our aid if anybody should attack us; and then having at his advice hung out our hurricane-

lamp on the outer hook of the Escargot, to prevent anything driving into us in the dark, we bade good night to the concourse, and they going off, Peggy and James and I were left to our own company and devices.

It was not the very happiest kind of position to be in, out all alone there two miles away from the nearest human being, with the exception of the signalman, in a dark road, with the sea soughing sixty or seventy feet down below us; nor the most comfortable, as we had nothing but the remains of our eggs and sardines, and a few very stale biscuits, the remains of one of our Alassio picnics, to subsist upon; and when we should want to go to bed, our bed was so steep from the pillow to the feet that one almost felt as if one was standing upright in it. But we had a miraculous escape to be thankful for, and we felt that it would be rather mean not to try to make the best of it; so we managed to make a fairish meal out of our fragments, with lots of hot tea, which in our then half-frozen condition was a real luxury, though it was without milk, to wash it down. The cooking was rather a one-sided job, and we could only fill the kettle half-full by reason of the angle that the stove was at: and then about half-past nine we built up the foot of the bed with cushions and all the stray furniture that seemed suitable for the purpose, till we had brought it up to the requisite level with the head, and after a final look out to see that the lamp was all right, and an interchange of good wishes with the faithful signalman, who was occupying some of his leisure time between the passing of two trains with a contemplation of the outside architecture of the caravan, we turned in, and it would certainly be wrong to say that we slept badly.

We were woke at five o'clock, however, by a tremendous cackling just under our stern window, somewhat resembling

the parrot-house in the Zoo, and looking out I saw, by the very dim streaks of daylight that were just showing, that it was the relief-party already arrived, and preparing to set to work to lift us out of the ditch. I hurried into my clothes, and went out to join them. I found the signalman was already there, and had assumed command of the operations, an arrangement which, seeing that he was the one with most head on his shoulders, and also of the same language as the rank and file of the party, I very readily acquiesced in.

We got the jack out of the fodder-box, but then we found that, owing to the depth that the caravan had fallen into the ditch, we hadn't room to work it, so we had to take the fodder-box itself right off, which had the additional advantage of considerably lightening the load we had to lift. Then we placed the jack under the hind axle and proceeded to hoist; but just as we had got the jack up to its full lift, the edge of the ditch gave way, and down came the whole thing again, rather to Peg's alarm inside, to whom the sudden shock conveyed the notion of a kind of earthquake.

We held another counsel of war, and decided it would be best to raise the forecarriage first, which we did very gingerly but successfully, and then hove the fore-wheels round with crowbars worked against the rock as a fulcrum, till we got both of them over the road and dropped them gently on to it: then returning to the hind-wheels, we placed the jack more securely this time and raised it, and at the critical moment when the near hind-wheel reached the level of the road, with crowbars and shoulders and a prodigious expenditure of *Sacramentis!* and *Christos!* we swung the whole caravan round, and the jack slowly tipping over on its own base, the Escargot at last settled down into safety. There was a tremendous strain on the springs during the operation:

but, as remarked before, they were of the best, and no harm came of it. The Escargot was starting off down the rest of the hill on her own account, which might have resulted in another disaster; but we caught her in time and put the brake hard on, and after replacing the fodder-box, guided her safely down to the bottom, bringing her up alongside the wall of the railway just opposite the signalman's box.

I rewarded the relief party with gold, not only because I had nothing else, but because I thought that they deserved it, and thereby succeeded in actually contenting them, and they having departed on their own way, I returned to Peggy, who of course was lying now with her feet very considerably above her head, to put her straight, and dress, and wait for Joseph with provisions, the mares, and the mended pole. Peggy very sensibly dropped off to sleep again, and staved off the pangs of hunger that way; but James and I had to make it out on tea and some very coarse bread which the signalman kindly brought across the line to us, which was very welcome, though the flavour of it depended a good deal on the Spartan butter that we ate it with.

The signalman and we struck up an eternal friendship during our stay there, our inducement thereto being naturally warm gratitude for all he did for us, and his innate good feeling, not unmixed perhaps with a trifle of excusable curiosity. He first expressed his admiration of my powers of shaving myself, an art in which I do not hold myself altogether perfect, but which he, good man, apparently did not personally practise at all; and when I had finished dressing, he made signs that he would like to be shown round the premises. I conducted him all over the outside while Peg was dressing, he even, in his enthusiasm, crawling about underneath to examine the springs, and climbing up to the

roof to inspect the false canvas roof, and being very warm in his eulogiums of the general strength and workmanship of all that he saw; and when Peggy was ready, and we admitted him within, he went into positive raptures over our interior economy, and sat himself down so resolutely to admire everything, that we began to have doubts whether we should ever get him out again. However, he suddenly remembered that he had to be at his post for the Genoa express to pass, and so at last took his departure, overwhelmed with gratitude for a present of one of my asbestos pipes, which he gave us to understand that he would everlastingly treasure in remembrance of our visit.

Joseph turned up very soon after that with the mares and our breakfast, and the pole, carried by two of the amphibious gentry who had come to our rescue the previous night. I did not much like the fashion in which the pole had been mended. Instead of pegging it through the two portions of the split and serving it round with strong whipcord, as I had ordered should be done, the blacksmith who had undertaken it had merely let in two plates of iron at the top and bottom of the split, each with four two-inch screws, two in each section of the fractured pole above and below, thereby violating the good old rule of wood to wood and iron to iron. Still, with gentle driving, it might serve to take us on for the remainder of our distance, and we had already been delayed longer than we cared for, so we determined at any rate to give it a trial into Noli, and if it showed any signs of weakness by that time, we could stop there to have it repaired more effectively.

We accordingly ate our breakfast, of which we made very short work, for poor Peg was of course ravenous, and James and I, in spite of our previous meal off the signalman's charity,

were not much better: and that finished, we put the mares to, and having added a small pecuniary testimonial to that which we had already presented to the signalman, who had seen his train pass, and was now come to bid us a cordial farewell, we made an attempt at last to resume our journey. But the attempt was in vain. We travelled about twenty yards along the level, and then the road began to rise again. Directly the traces got taut, the Missus commenced jibbing again, and the pole didn't look like standing the strain. So we gave it up, and despatched Joseph, on foot this time, much to his disgust, but we really didn't see the necessity of taking all the work out of our mares for his glorification, into Noli again to get a *renfort*.

He was gone about three hours over that job, and Peggy and James and I had to pass the time as best we could in the meantime. We had the signalman to help us out, and he seemed very pleased to have some company in his solitude. I think we picked up more of the language in those three hours than we did the whole of the rest of our time in Italy, and he told us, we interpreting all the words which weren't like either French or Latin with the aid of the dictionary, that he had to stop there for a month at a time, with only a week off, minding the tunnels on each side of him, his business being to give warning in case any of the rocks fell out of their places on to the line. We asked him through the same medium, grammar of course not being taken into consideration, what would happen if the big bit of rock which overhung his hut in the cutting should chance to fall down upon him, to which he replied that of course that would be no concern of his. Then, while Peg had set to work to tidy up the inside of the Escargot, things naturally having got somewhat out of place during our late absence from the perpendicular, he came

and helped me in dressing a small rub which we discovered on the Missus's flank, and which very probably had been the cause of the poor old lady's jibbing, with grease, and, to keep it from being further chafed, tying the larger half of my bath-sponge, soaked in oil, round the trace where it touched her.



Another small relief to the tedium of our waiting turned up in the shape of one of the parties who had brought the pole, who, having sat down for a time under the shadow of a rock to sleep off Italian-wise his unparalleled exertions, after a time woke up, and finding us still there, and, as far as he could see, helpless, considered it a good opportunity for turning a more or less honest penny out of us, and so came up and introduced himself to us as the owner of the wretched piece of rope

which had been the cause of our accident the night before, demanding twelve francs as compensation for the damage to it. This was absurd on the face of it, as in the first place the whole thing wasn't worth 1 franc 50, and his proposed charge was at the rate of about three francs the

yard; and secondly, he had got the line, which he could easily splice if it was worth splicing, and we would have nothing to show for our money. I at first, therefore, treated him with indifference, paying no attention to his demands. Then he came again, and began to be abusive, threatening us with the law. This our signalman interpreted to us after the fashion which we had now established between us, so I requested him to return as answer that we would only be too happy to go before a judge, as we should in all probability in that case get off without paying a centime. I also offered him a franc for the line, provided he left it with us.

He retired for a bit to think over my proposition, but in about a quarter of an hour came back with a kind of appeal *ad misericordiam* that the line belonged not to him but to his *padrone*, and he would have to make it good: so I again offered him his franc, and said that if he would go on in front and get his *padrone* ready, and meet us at Noli, we would be very glad to settle matters with him in person — a proposal with which anybody but an Italian would have closed at once, considering the circumstances; but he was resolved to get his full demand out of me, and so went on groaning out about his *padrone* not being able to come and see us, and being sure not to take such a small sum for his valuable line, till at last I told our intermediary to let him know that I retracted even the franc, and if the *padrone* did not turn up at Noli, so much the better for me. The importunate one again retired at that, and sat down for some time; but at last, after calling out that he was going on to Noli, and that we should find the *padrone* there waiting to hale us before the authorities, he set off at a snail's pace over the hill, looking back every

now and then, evidently in the expectation that we were going to call him back again, but we didn't.

We then had lunch, and at last Joseph came back with the *renfort*, the same small beast which had come to help us out of our trouble before; and, hitching him on to the pole, we started away for the second time at about one o'clock. This time we were successful: encouraged as usual by the consciousness of something in front of her, and with the pain on her flank somewhat alleviated by the application of my bath-sponge, the Missus now faced the hill bravely, and passing through a tunnel at the top of it, we came out on the other side of the cape, with Noli lying in the next bay below us. The signalman accompanied us for a good way this time, leaving us with hearty good wishes for our future safety, at the bottom of the hill down, to walk back through the railway tunnel to his box: one of the few accommodating lower-class Italians whom we met in the course of this part of our travels.

Noli is a good-sized town as towns in that part of the country go, apparently chiefly devoted to fishing, lying back from the shore a bit, with the road between itself and the sea. We stopped there for about half an hour, in order to replenish our fodder-sacks at a store Joseph had found during his former visits to the place, and during the wait we had a large crowd of wondering idlers surging round us, all hazarding guesses as to what we were, and some of them showing themselves to be more adventurous than the rest by hurriedly touching our mares' noses. Neither our old friend with the rope turned up, however, nor did his *padrone*, and we have heard nothing more of either of them unto this day.

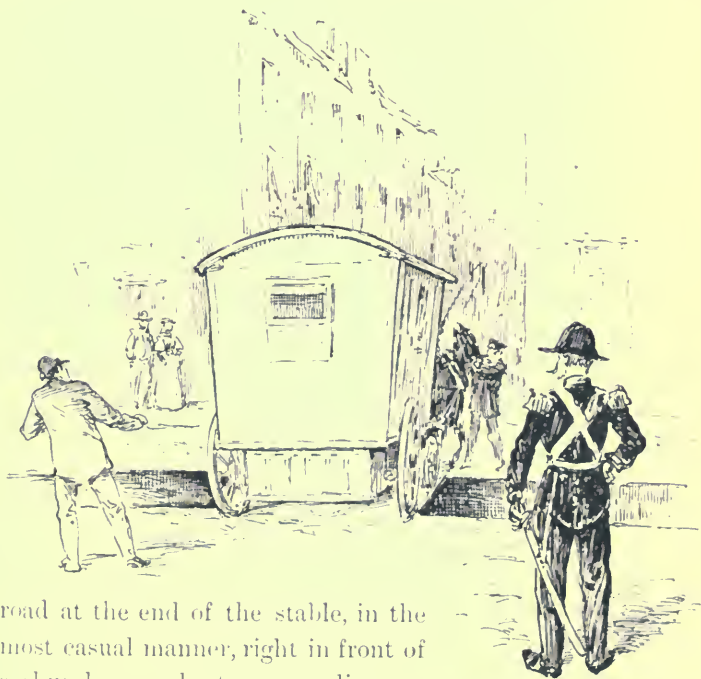
Joseph had engaged the *renfort* to take us on to Savona,

as I had told him to do, speed being rather an object now, as we were due at Genoa before the Monday, when the rest of our party were to come on, and we were now a good day and a half behind time. We could not press forward too fast, owing to the crank condition of our pole; but we kept along at a good steady six kilometres an hour, sometimes along level bits of road where the hills drew back from the shore, but more often up and down round the many headlands which jut out into the Mediterranean along that coast, always being careful to put the shoe on now going down the least hill, passing villages and little towns—in more than one of the latter having to walk ahead of the Escargot to keep a sharp look-out against the axles catching in the walls of the streets—and late in the afternoon we arrived at Savona.

Our *renfortier* was a good enough man in his way, but when he found that we weren't so conversant with his language as he was, did not make much further effort to understand us or to make himself understood by us, but jogged along contentedly, sitting sideways on his horse, smoking his pipe, and to all appearance very frequently fast asleep. At the entrance to Savona he left us, making signs that the police would not allow him to come any further with us—reasons unstated—so we were thrown upon our own resources to find a camping-ground for the night.

Savona is a large place, with fine streets and squares, of which we saw rather more than we wanted during our wanderings in search of a resting-place; but at last, by special good fortune, we happened to address ourselves to the one livery-stable keeper in the town who spoke French, and he readily agreed to take us in. The way to his quarters lay over an open drain with just road enough left to take the

inside edges of the tires of our wheels: artillery competition driving wasn't in it. As it was, our near fore-wheel slipped into the drain, and was only pulled out by sheer strength on the part of the mares; but that passed safely, we found a comfortable stable, of sorts, for the mares on the other side: and we were run up to the side of the



road at the end of the stable, in the most casual manner, right in front of a church—our host, on a policeman raising some objection to the proceeding, telling him that we were personal friends of his, the Prince and Princess of Wales travelling very much *incog.*, or something of that sort, after which we were no more molested.

It came on to sleet soon after we had cast anchor, so Peggy, who had a bit of a headache, did not go out

again. I went to the post-office, and to buy some things for dinner. Savona, once the centre of the Italian pottery manufacture, was the most striking Italian town I had yet seen, but the seeing was certainly done under difficulties, as the night was dark, and the lighting was very bad. There were not many people in the streets, and those who were seemed to be in a great hurry to get home out of the cold. So was I: so I got back to Peg as speedily as I could, and we spent the rest of the evening mainly in calculating our chances of getting to Genoa the next day.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST MISHAP—COGOLETTO—VOLTRI—GENOA—THE
END OF THE EXPEDITION.

OUR obliging stable-man found us a *renfort* next morning—the most respectable one we had had on the whole of our journey—a nice little fat fourteen-hand cob, with a boy of about sixteen in charge of him, very well dressed in a suit of brown cloth with flappy hat to match, and we left Savona early, so as to complete our journey that night.

Joseph and the *renfortier* soon fraternised in a sort of broken language of their own made up for the occasion, and though we started with the *renfortier* sitting ahead on his own animal in the usual fashion, Joseph, who was driving, soon persuaded him to come and stand beside him on the footboard, while he improvised a pair of reins for the *renfort* out of a piece of rope we had in the fodder-box, and so drove unicorn much to his own delight; and as the only objection I had had at the beginning to the *renfort* was that he wouldn't go out of a walk, and this arrangement of Joseph's enabled us to go at our own pace, I had no objection to it.

Not very far beyond Savona, as we were approaching a

tunnel through one of the headlands, the *renfortier* pointed through it and remarked "Genova," and there in the far distance it was sure enough, with its Phare and some of the tallest churches shining in the morning sun, and we felt that we had not long before us now before our journey would be accomplished. But it was not to be that night after all. Our progress was uneventful for some two or three hours. A constant repetition of climbing up one side of a headland, going round it, and then descending the other side, the latter always with the shoe on, with the occasional variation of a seaside village of the same pattern as before. But towards mid-day, as we were approaching Cogoletto, the road took a turn inland, after circumventing a cape in order to cross a stream that ran into the sea just there, and which was too wide for a bridge at its mouth. There were a lot of milestone-shaped stones on the parapet side of the road, either placed there to keep carts from bumping against the parapet, or perhaps having been once the only protection against things going over the edge before the addition of the parapet. As we descended the incline to the bridge, we met a heavily laden stone-cart coming up, drawn by six struggling mules, and when the two foremost mules came opposite our mares, in their struggles they pressed us right over to the outside of the road amongst these big stones. Our off fore-wheel caught in one of the stones, and brought up dead short. I called to Joseph to mind what he was about, but the effort he made to back the mares, so as to clear us of the obstacle, was too much for the flimsy way in which the pole had been repaired, and it split up again.

Our *renfort* climbed down and did the talking — of a forcible kind — to the muleteers, but we got no help from

them, and so we had to cast about for means to repair the broken pole in the best manner we could, to get on into Cogoletto. We had two iron stanchions under the body of the caravan, which had been intended for an awning in front of our door when we were encamped on some of the glorious hot days of the Riviera winter: but those days having never come to pass, they had never been used. We now got them out, and bound them firmly along the pole over the split with cords, and every strap we had in the caravan—Peg's umbrella-straps included—covering them with sacking to prevent them hurting the mares, and having put the mares to again, we proceeded with this make-shift arrangement very gingerly down the rest of the road to the little town.

Cogoletto, the reputed birthplace of Christopher Columbus, is a tolerably thriving little place, whose chief business is shipbuilding, and our hearts were rejoiced on nearing it to see the quantity of spars lying about, affording us lively hopes of being able to get a new pole made there. But the street was very narrow, and had a moderately sharp turn in it about half-way through the town, and on endeavouring to round this turn, the irons of our temporary splicings all bent themselves up into arches, and we were left there helpless, not for the first time causing a block on the Riviera road.

Fortunately, however, it happened just to be the dinner-hour, and a lot of workmen were wanting to come by; so with the usual inducement we got them to shove the *Escargot*, out of which we had taken the mares, about twenty yards along, and then turn her into an open space in the centre of the town looking on to the sea, and evidently used for shipbuilding purposes, as there were two or three

skeletons of vessels already laid down there. Then, having sent Joseph and the *renfortier* to find a stable for the mares and the cob, when Joseph returned I left James and him in charge of Peg and the Escargot, which appeared necessary, as there was a large collection of natives of all sizes and sexes now gathered round us, all ready to investigate, and it was not unlikely if possible to improve the occasion by a little self-help, and shouldering the pole, I went off up the street to find some intelligent carpenter to run a new pole up for us after the model of the broken one.

I rather flatter myself after that experience that I should get on remarkably well with a savage tribe—not, of course, a cannibal one, but of the average everyday kind. I walked with my pole to the entrance of the village, where I had noticed a large pile of spars lying as we passed, and seeing a man sitting on the end of one of them with an air of proprietorship, I approached him, and tapping first my pole and showing him the fracture, and then one of his spars, looked at him as if to inquire if he could help me out in my difficulty. He grasped my meaning at once, and smiling, shook his head to express that he could not do anything for me; but rising from his seat, he took me in a friendly way by the shoulder, and seeing that he wished me to come with him, I concurred, and followed him right through the town to the other end of the street, where we came to a carpenter's shop. There he left me with an agreeable nod (satisfactory Italian lower class No. 3), and I manœuvred my pole in through the door of the shop, and setting it down across two trestles, looked about for the carpenter.

He was not long in appearing, having been dining in the

neighbouring shop, a blacksmith's, connected with his by an inside door, the whole being, I suppose, a joint-stock concern; and I immediately went through the same pantomime as with the other man, with my pole and a long spar that was lying across the rafters at the top of the shop. He was a little more dense than the first man, so I slightly elaborated the performance by pointing to each of the fittings of my pole and then to the parts of his spar on which, when it was finished, they would each be respectively placed, and a gleam of intelligence dawned on his countenance: he pulled down his spar, placed my pole on it, and with his pencil traced on a rough outline on the unfinished timber of what I wanted. I nodded, so he called his assistants in from the next shop, and we all set to work—one sawing, one spoke-shaving, and one boring holes to take the fastenings of the fittings, while I took the fittings off the broken pole, and the shaping of the new one was soon well under weigh.

Then I thought I could fairly leave them, while I went to see how Peggy was getting on. She was still being besieged by the Cogoletto folk, who were all very well-temperedly inclined, however, and were, besides, kept in wholesome awe by James, who was sitting beside Joseph on the footboard, really rather anxious to get down to play with them, but which anxiety they interpreted as being to attack them. I told Peggy how we were getting on, and we celebrated our good fortune by a copious lunch off the remains of the provisions we had bought at Savona, congratulating ourselves that it would be our last meal before arriving at Genoa.

But we were doomed to be what is vulgarly termed sold again. When I got back to the carpenter's shop, about three-

quarters of an hour later, expecting to find the pole finished, or anyhow very nearly so, I found instead that the carpenter and his men had apparently forgotten all about it, and were busily engaged on somebody else's job, which they had commenced as soon as the novelty of mine had worn off. I protested in dumb show, but for some time they paid no attention, till at last I boldly took up one of the abandoned spoke-shaves and began to work at my pole myself. The carpenters then left their work and came round me, and I was preparing myself indeed to be forcibly ejected from the shop; but their intentions proved to be by no means hostile, and being I suppose by this time tired of their other occupation, and ready to change back again, they resumed work with a will.

I stood over them this time: they worked skilfully, as all Italiaus can by nature when they try—witness that noble monument to their industry, the Law Courts—but their tools seemed rather primitive, not being much in advance of those used in Christopher Columbus's time,—I wonder by the way if any of those fellows could have told me who Christopher Columbus was,—and the progress, though steady now, was rather slow, and it was another two and a half hours good before we got the fittings on, and the pole was ready for use. The carpenter proposed painting it to match the other, but we had no time for vanities of that sort, and so about half-past four we carried the new pole triumphantly back to the caravan and fitted it into its socket.

I paid the carpenter twelve francs, as he asked, and which seemed reasonable, and then, having put our team to as soon as we could, we left Christopher Columbus's birthplace and proceeded on our onward way. It was pretty dark by this time, and we had to go at half-speed; but the *renfortier* knew

the road well, so that we had no further mishaps, and reached Voltri at about seven o'clock.

There we decided that it was now far too late to think of entering Genoa. We had to draw up for over an hour in the middle of the street, while the *renfortier* went to look for a place to put up at; but at last, about half-past eight, we were safely located at the side of the road at the other end of the town, opposite a somewhat inferior-looking public-house, on a steep hill, with two big stones under our hind-wheels to prevent us running back, and creating havoc amongst the public and private buildings of the flourishing city of Voltri at the bottom. The innkeeper was a surly sort of man, and it required all the blarney that the *renfortier* was master of to persuade him to give us milk and bread even at famine prices; but at last he gave in, and after supper we turned in early, having given Joseph strict injunctions to be up betimes, so as to make an early start to get into Genoa before the traffic became too crowded.

Joseph called us early enough on the morrow, but we did not leave Voltri till nearly nine o'clock, owing to our having to still the conscience of the *renfortier*—who said that his master had given him the strictest orders to be back at Savona early that morning—with the promise of a double day's pay. We had our doubts about those orders, but this was the last day of the voyage, and we could afford to be generous. At Pegli we came on the tram from Genoa, and what with the lines of that, and the vileness of the road on either side of it, it is still a wonder to me that we did not get a wheel wrenched off when just in sight of our final stopping-place. But we manœuvred over the dangers without accident through the suburbs of Genoa, and ascending the last hill round by the Phare, entered

Genoa itself about eleven, and pulled up on a piece of waste ground at the entrance to the town, opposite the inner harbour.

The hotel proprietor at Alassio had written to his colleague of the Hotel de Londres at Genoa to ask him to prepare for us, and so now Peggy and I dressed and left the Escargot in Joseph's charge, having, with the *renfortier's* aid, squared an adjacent policeman, and walked on till we came to that hotel to see what had been done. The proprietor welcomed us cordially: he had everything ready for us, stables, standing-place for the Escargot, and rooms for ourselves; and he kindly came back with us to where we had left the others, to conduct us into port. We helped him up inside, and set forward under his guidance: he was a little nervous about losing his dignity from being seen in a caravan, and so remained ensconced behind me as I stood in the doorway, peeping out over my shoulder and directing me as to the proper turns as we went along. There was a tremendous hill up to the stables, and he doubted whether our team could pull the Escargot up it: so did I; but the mares seemed to know that this was the end of all things, and they took it without a flinch—I think as sharp a gradient as we had on the whole of our journey.

The stables were comfortable, and the Escargot was laid up in a stone-mason's yard opposite. Peggy and I packed up our portmanteaus, and the porter came round to fetch them to the hotel, and so with much regret we ceased our residence in the trusty Escargot for good.

The rest of our party came on to Genoa the next day, and for a week after that Willie and I were busy seeing to the sale of the mares and the shipping of the Escargot. The first we managed, after going the round of all the wharfingers and carriers of the city, who seemed to be the most likely customers, by advertising, which produced a marble-master—if that's the correct expression for a man who owns marble quarries—from the very place where we had stopped to have our new pole made, Cogoletto. He wanted to give me about three-fourths of their original price; but as they were in much better condition than when we had first bought them, we didn't see that, and so by walking away scornfully after every increased bid that he made, we at last succeeded in getting him up to the original price and a quarter, without a warranty,—but we knew he couldn't think we had cheated him, for we learnt from Joseph that before he came to call on us at the hotel he had brought a vet up and carefully gone all over them. The money was paid down, and good old Missus and Mary Ann left early next morning, the whole expedition having taken a sorrowful farewell of them the night of their sale, for they had served us well and faithfully, having brought us a fair 750 miles, in spite of their occasional eccentricities.

The shipping of the Escargot was very kindly seen to by Mr G——, agent to the General Steam Navigation Company at Genoa. We had to miss one steamer, which had loaded up so full at Leghorn that the captain was afraid of taking the Escargot on board, and so, as Willie and I wanted to come home, we had to put her in pawn with the custom-house till the next steamer should arrive. The custom-house, by the way, took a fine out of my deposit money, for having unwittingly sold the mares without giving them notice. Two

carters in the employ of the custom-house came with their horses one afternoon just before we left, and we took her right through Genoa to the gate at the other end, in which we stuck after the same manner that we did at Toulon, and out into the suburbs, where we left her covered over with tarpaulin till an opportunity occurred for shipping her back to England.

And soon afterwards Peg and her mother and sister left for Florence, and Willie and James and I returned to our normal pursuits in England, bringing with us Joseph, who begged hard to be allowed to remain in my service.

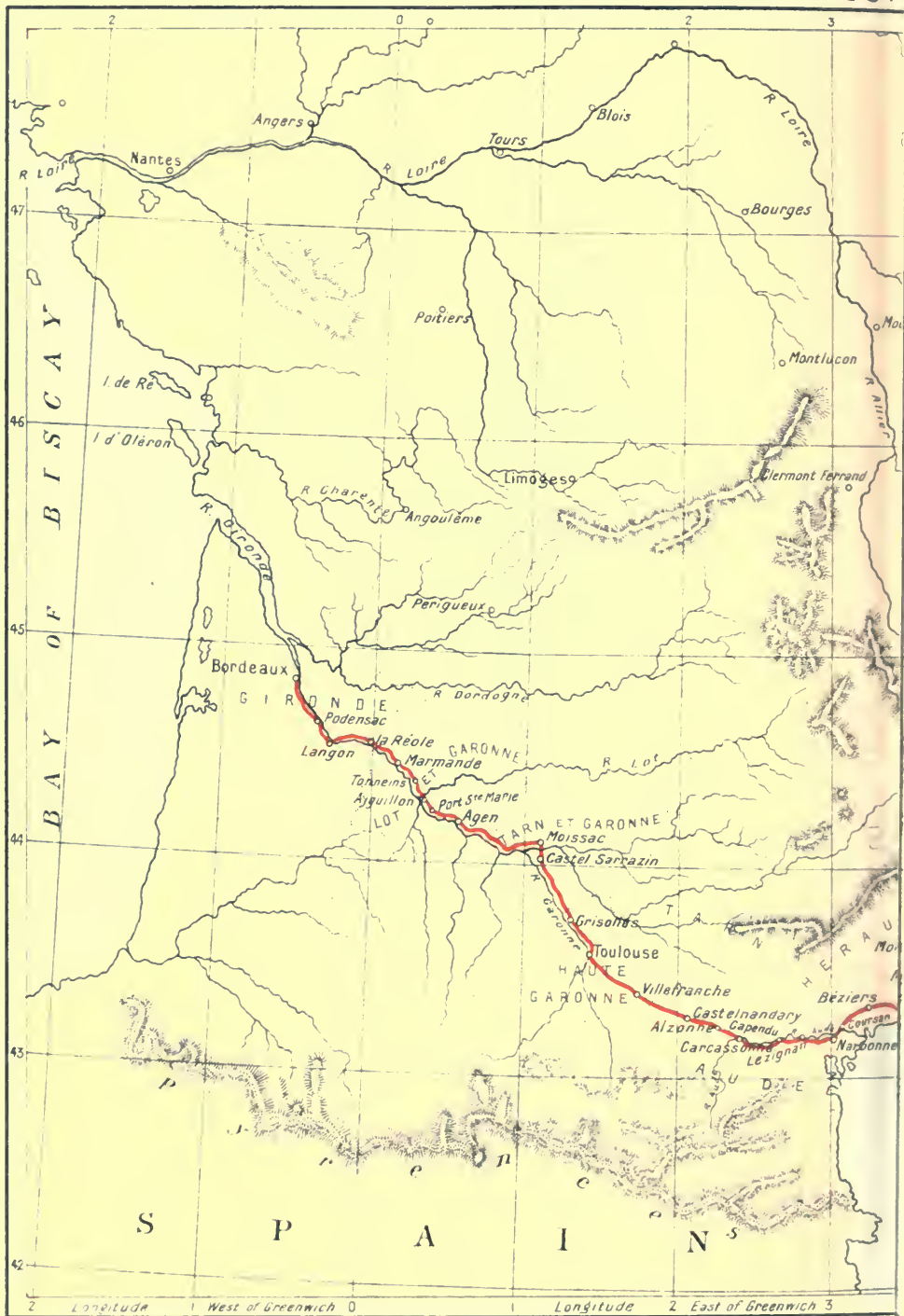
The Escargot, I heard from the General Steam Navigation Company, just got out of Italy on the fiftieth day, thus saving the forfeiture of my deposit. But the voyage from Genoa is a long one, and Peggy had finished her extra tour in Italy, and had been home some time and settled, when, in the second week in May, the London office of the company telegraphed me that the expected steamer had been signalled, and would shortly be up the river. I went to meet her: there was some difficulty in landing the Escargot, as it was a different wharf to that from which she had been shipped when she left, and she had to be lowered first into a lighter and floated round to a more convenient spot. Our new pole was broken in the course of these proceedings, but an ingenious wharf-keeper mended it up by nailing planks along it over the fracture. I had little difficulty in passing the custom-house; and then, having previously telegraphed to the coalman, when he arrived with his horses, which he did with the greatest promptitude within three and a half hours,

we turned our faces towards home, at 9.30 on a Saturday evening, and after travelling all night, arrived at 2 A.M. at the place whence, just about six months before, we had set off, and laid up the good caravan Escargot in her well-earned resting-place.

May it be our good fortune ere long to set forth again!



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